

# PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

PART II:  
GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE

BY  
T. R. BATTEN

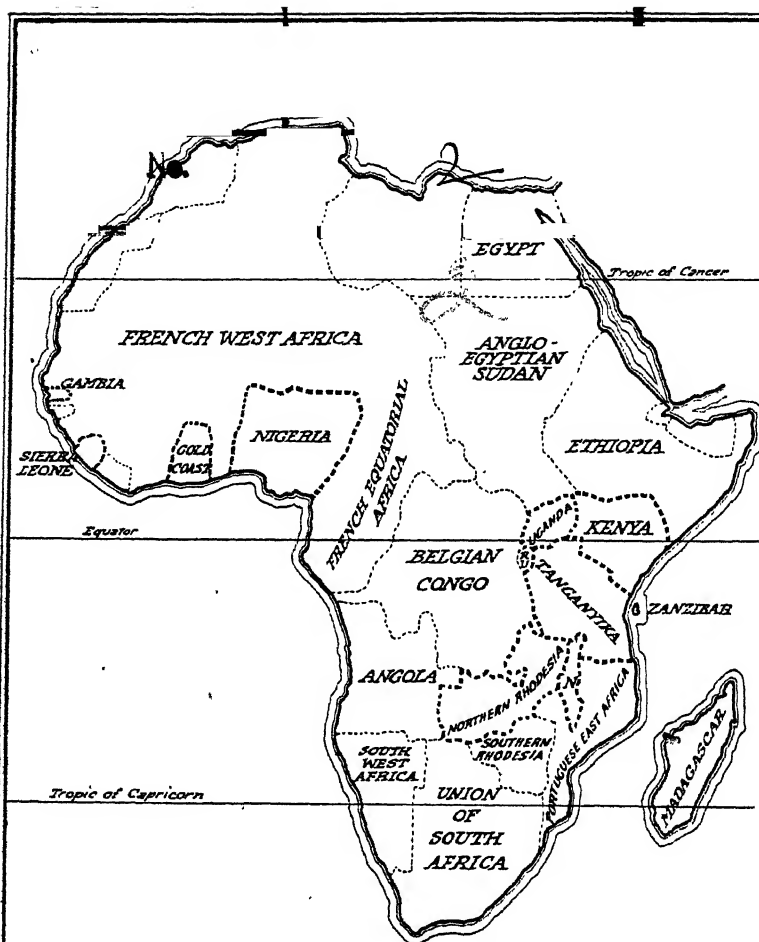
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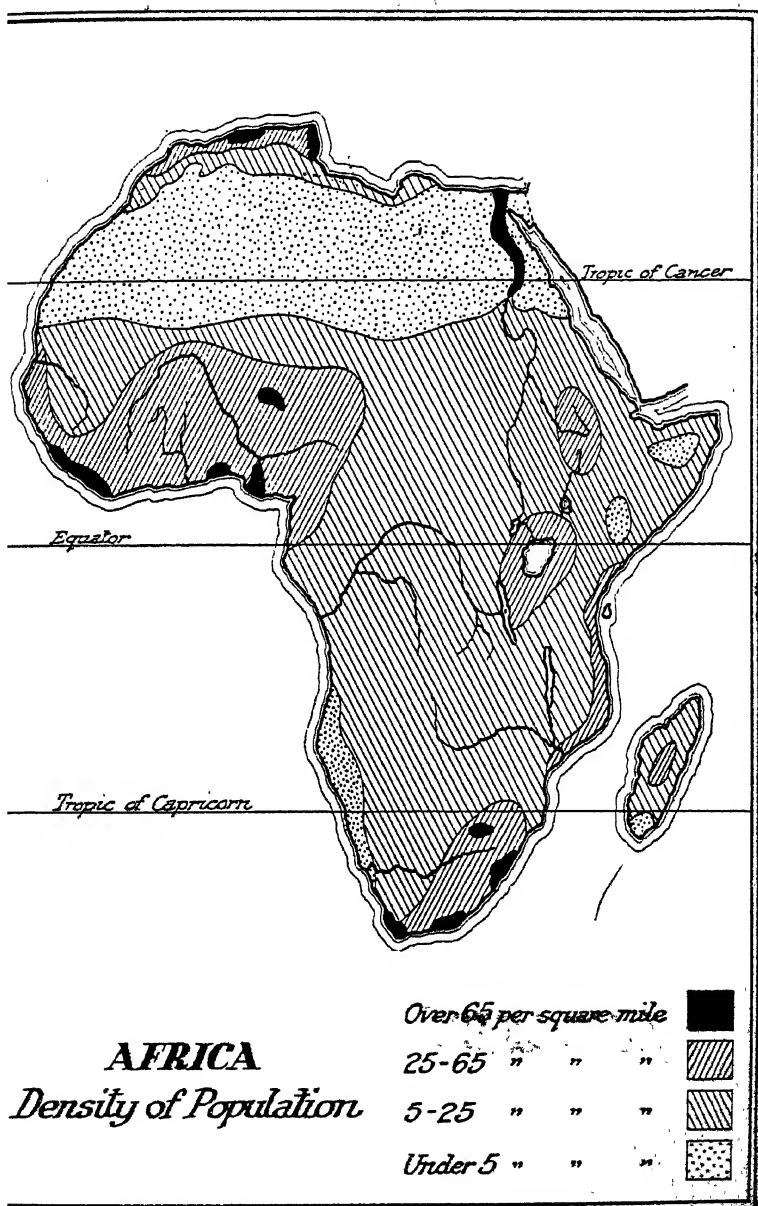
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# AFRICA

## *Political Divisions*

*N - Nyasaland*  
*R.U - Ruanda Urundi*







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## PART II: GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE



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T. R. BATTEN

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS book and its predecessor (Part I) aim at providing for the general reader a brief introduction to the present African situation, with particular reference to the problem of self-government.

I am very conscious of the difficulty of covering so wide a field in so small a space, but I am convinced that the attempt should be made. If I have had one class of readers more in mind than another, it is those who have gone far enough through the secondary schools to be fully literate in English, but who have not had the opportunity of further education, except, perhaps, specialized training for one of the professions. It is these men who at present hold the key to African progress. They are politically conscious, and many have already organized themselves into discussion and study groups. I hope that these books may be useful to them by stimulating discussion of a number of related topics.

I have tried to be impartial. If I have a bias it is to plead with educated Africans the cause of the illiterate. Most of my own work in tropical Africa has been done in educationally 'backward' areas, and it has left me with a sense of tragic waste. For every African man or woman who wins through to secondary or higher education there are hundreds—intellectually as well equipped—who have no education at all, or none worthy of the name. Yet if they can be educated, either as adults or as children, they are potentially an immensely powerful force in speeding African economic and political development.

A few of the people who have read this book in manuscript have suggested that I have painted a rather gloomy picture, and even that I may be thought to have represented Africans in an unfavourable light. Whether the picture is indeed gloomy must depend on one's estimate of African character and African intelligence. It is my own strongly-held belief, based on twenty years of work in African elementary, secondary and higher education, that Africans are no whit inferior to men of any other race. Actual differences in attainment still exist, but none that cannot be fairly attributed to differences in environment and opportunity. Surely, the road to progress lies, not in minimizing and glossing over hampering difficulties, but in probing them and seeking their cause, so that they may be overcome.

My grateful thanks are due to Dr. Audrey I. Richards of the London School of Economics for general and detailed criticism of the whole book, and to many other persons, African and European, who read and criticized particular chapters. I owe a special debt to Mr. Arthur Philips, Crown Counsel, Kenya, and to Mr. Justice Wilson, Tanganyika Territory, for their criticism of the original draft of Chapter XII. I have not accepted all the criticism offered, and the responsibility for the remaining imperfections is therefore entirely mine.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THIS book contains the second part of a survey of some of the present-day problems of Britain's tropical African colonies. The first part deals especially with economic problems, and this second part with the social and political situation: but all problems, of whatever kind, are considered in relation to the main problem of reaching full self-governing status.

I dealt first with economic problems because no grant of self-government can greatly benefit the people to whom it is made unless they can produce enough wealth to support an efficient government of their own. No government can be fully efficient unless the people can afford to pay taxes large enough to provide the social and economic services they need for their health and happiness.

Among these services education must rank high if the people are to be able to judge wisely when ordering the affairs of their country under any democratic form of government.

Arthur Bryant has admirably stated the need for a sound economic foundation in the modern democratic State:<sup>1</sup>

An under-nourished man who has been deprived by economic circumstances of a decent family life, adequate education, the discipline and self-respect of useful labour, and the background and security of an assured home cannot be expected wisely to control his own life or that of the nation to which he belongs. He will, instead, be the prey of political and economic hucksters and sharks.

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 2 June 1945.

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The writer was referring especially to Britain, but his words apply with equal truth to tropical Africa.

My survey of economic problems was necessarily incomplete: partly, of course, because lack of space in a small book meant that much detail had to be left out, but partly also because it is impossible to separate economic from social problems. Thus the standard of health and education both influences and is influenced by the economic situation. African standards of health and education cannot rise unless more wealth can be produced to provide for greatly increased numbers of doctors, nurses, health-workers and teachers, and to build and maintain many more hospitals, dispensaries and schools. But, on the other hand, higher standards of health and education are equally necessary to assist economic production. Ill health and ignorance are powerful factors in keeping people poor. It was in the hope of helping Africans to overcome this difficulty that the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts.

While problems of health and education are thus doubly linked with those of economics, they are similarly closely related to the subject matter of the latter part of this book, where I discuss the problem of safeguarding freedom for the citizens of the future self-governing African states. The term 'self-government' presupposes the existence of some political unit which is capable of governing itself. But where in any British tropical African colony does the necessary degree of unity of purpose and common feeling exist at the present day? And is self-government to mean for most Africans a mere change of rulers—a change from white rule to that of a small minority of educated Africans, while safeguards are lacking that they will rule in the interests of all rather than of themselves alone? To the British—and to the Americans—true self-government means something more than that. It means that the people are sufficiently well educated and experienced in public affairs to have

developed the qualities which alone make possible the lasting enjoyment of freedom. Woodrow Wilson, a former President of the United States of America, once wrote:

Self-government is not a mere form of institution, to be had when desired, if only the proper pains are taken. It is a form of character. It follows upon the long discipline which gives a people self-possession, self-mastery, the habit of order and peace and common counsel, and a reverence for law which will not fail when they themselves become the makers of law.

Self-government, after all, should be representative of the will of the people, and it can only flourish where the people generally possess the qualities which fit them to exercise it. To-day, widespread education which is in the fullest sense designed to produce these qualities is one of Africa's most urgent needs. Real freedom is not something which can be given and accepted. Poverty, disease, prejudice and self-seeking are its enemies no less than conquest by a foreign power.

## CHAPTER II

### HEALTH IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

**H**EALTH problems are obviously important, if only because their solution would reduce preventable suffering. But this is not the only reason. While health standards remain low almost all desirable economic and social development is affected for the worse. For many reasons it is essential that Africans should produce more wealth, but poor health remains as a chief cause of inefficiency among peasants and labourers. Education is backward. Yet the value even of the teaching it has so far been possible to provide is lessened by the effect of ill health on ability to learn and on school attendances. In fact, success in raising health standards is basic to the whole problem of development.

Improvement partly depends on the discovery of better ways of preventing and curing disease. Progress of this sort is made possible by research and patient investigation into the causes and effects of disease on the human body. Better knowledge of causes may suggest new means of prevention: and the more that is known of the course of disease in the body the greater the hope of better methods of curing it. The prevention of malaria, for instance, has been made possible by discovering that the disease is caused by the bite of infected anopheline mosquitoes. Not until this was known was it possible to suggest means of reducing the danger by the use of mosquito nets, the screening of houses with wire gauze, and the wearing of protective clothing such as mosquito boots at night. Then study of the life history of the mosquito showed that the danger could be further reduced by draining the swamps

and standing water where mosquitoes breed, or by oiling the surface of water to kill the mosquitoes at the larval stage. Similarly, study of the disease in the human body has led to the discovery of better ways of curing malaria when it occurs. And, of course, constant efforts are still being made to control this and other diseases either by attacking their causes or by finding more effective treatment of cases of illness.

There is a second approach to health problems which emphasizes the importance of measures of even wider scope. It regards health as something more than the mere absence of disease, and as a positive state of abounding fitness and energy in which the human body reaches the fullest possible development of its physical and mental powers. As this ideal is approached disease will become less because people will become more able to resist it, or at the worst it will be more easily cured.

Health viewed from this angle involves far more than the control of disease through prevention and cure. The centre of interest moves to those factors which are necessary to the best possible development of health, and there is much less concern with the causes of specific kinds of disease.

From whichever angle the problems of health are looked at—the promotion of positive good health or the prevention and cure of disease—they cannot be solved completely in the hospital and laboratory. The factors which determine the standard of health of the people in any particular place are many, and the habits and customs of the people are not less important in this respect than the existence of possible causes of infection. The fact that germs of disease are present does not necessarily mean that all persons who come in contact with them become ill. Disease attacks men most successfully when their standard of general health is low, and when the conditions under which they live expose them to constant and heavy risk of infection.

One common reason for a low standard of general health

and well-being is lack of sufficient food, but health is also affected where the food eaten, though ample in quantity, lacks some of the substances constantly required by the body to keep it in full health. In many cases lack of such substances may lead to certain kinds of illness which are known as nutritional diseases. Beri-beri, pellagra and scurvy are diseases of this kind, and they are cured mainly by introducing into the patient's diet foodstuffs which contain the missing substances. But even where no specific cases of nutritional disease occur the effect of a badly balanced diet is to make people much more open to attack by diseases of all kinds.<sup>1</sup>

Health standards are affected by other conditions also. Thus some diseases, such as leprosy, are spread by the close and frequent contact of healthy persons with lepers: others, such as tuberculosis, by breathing in air laden with germs given out in the breath of those who have the disease. Favourable conditions for the infection of healthy people with diseases of these kinds obviously exist where several people live crowded together in one small room, and the risk of infection is increased still more if door and window openings are small, and if those who occupy the room have the habit of closing these openings at night.

Bad housing also helps other kinds of disease to spread. The mud and wattle hut which is so common in tropical African villages, floored with mud and roofed with thatch, and often surrounded with food scraps and other rubbish on the ground outside, provides an ideal home for rats, ticks, fleas and other similar carriers of disease. Moreover, beds made from reeds or bamboos provide hiding places for lice and bedbugs. The spread of plague, relapsing fever, and typhus fever is helped by the existence of such conditions.

<sup>1</sup> For further information on this point see pp. 14-15. There is an excellent study of health and disease in relation to nutrition and food production in Dr. G. T. Wrench's book, *The Wheel of Health*, Daniel.



Yet other diseases become widely spread owing to the lack of any suitable arrangements for the disposal of human excrement. Flies settling on it may carry infection to food and thence to the body. Or the excrement may enter water and thus spread disease among those who drink the infected water. Diseases due to such causes are very common throughout most tropical countries. Many of them are helminthic diseases, i.e. diseases caused by the introduction into the body of parasitic worms. Hookworm and bilharzia are instances of this type of disease.

Diseases of these and other kinds were already common in tropical Africa long before Partition, and there is little reason to suppose that African health standards had changed very much for hundreds of years before that time. If anything health had probably improved owing to the introduction of such new crops as cassava, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, onions, sugarcane, maize and rice, as well as many other foodstuffs, by the Portuguese during their attempts at African colonization during the sixteenth century. Cassava was especially useful as a famine crop, and many of the other foodstuffs brought valuable new elements into African diets. Since Partition, however, a series of sweeping changes in African social and economic life have led to the rise of many new health problems.

The most obvious result of the Partition of Africa and the coming of the white man as far as health is concerned is that Europeans brought with them a considerable knowledge of the causes of disease, which has been further steadily increased by the study of disease in Africa. This knowledge has been used for the benefit of the people, both by governments through the officers of their medical departments, and by missions which have maintained many hospitals and dispensaries for the treatment of the sick. It is true that much has been accomplished. It is equally true that it has not so far been possible to develop

health and medical services widely enough to help effectively more than a very small proportion of the inhabitants of the colonies.

There is another side to the picture which makes it doubtful whether, in spite of the work that has been done, the health of the people generally is on balance better than it was fifty years ago. This is because of the changes which have taken place in the economic and social situation. Most of these changes have been inevitable, and even desirable on other grounds, but they have sometimes been the cause of new dangers to health.

We have already noted that proper feeding is one of the most important factors in safeguarding health standards, but it is more than doubtful whether the events of the last fifty years have enabled the peasant and labouring classes to attain a more ample and better-balanced diet. Trade, and especially the export trade, has been encouraged in every possible way: by the introduction of new crops, by the expert advice of officers of the agricultural departments, by the introduction of the plough, and, indirectly, by stimulating a demand for imported goods and by introducing a money tax. In some colonies this drive for production for export has been so successful that it has endangered the production of food, so that a primarily farming community has come to rely on imports to meet part of its food needs, as in the Gambia and on the Gold Coast. Also, in some places, production has already gone too far. Forests have been cut down to make room for the cultivation of export crops to such an extent that soil erosion has become a serious threat to food production, no less than to the export trade. Where this has happened it is becoming ever more difficult to maintain even existing standards of nutrition, and the immediate danger to health if this threat develops further needs no stressing. Against this, and on the credit side, must be set the introduction of new food crops and improved methods of agriculture in

some areas, but it is doubtful whether progress in these directions has been nearly great enough to offset the harm already done by the widespread evil of over-cultivation.

Health has also been affected during the present century by changes in African housing: favourably where people have become wealthy enough to use better materials such as tiles and bricks, locally made on the European pattern; but unfavourably in other instances. For example, many tribes once followed the custom of burning huts in which people had died. This was a health measure which did much to destroy possible centres of infectious disease, but it has now almost died out because the heavy destruction of forests has greatly reduced the available supply of poles for house-building. Health may have also been affected by taxation on housing: for the hut tax which was introduced into some colonies tended to encourage overcrowding, even in rural areas, by reducing the number of huts a family could afford to maintain. But overcrowding also occurs in towns, especially among wage labourers in temporary employment. In Nairobi, for instance,

... the Superintendent of Native Locations made a count at night of the numbers sleeping in certain houses in Pumwani. These houses, of which the permitted number of occupants is 171, were found to contain 503 on a certain night in 1938 and 481 on a certain night in 1941. The counts were surprise counts and the days chosen were not days when the town would be abnormally full.<sup>1</sup>

Similar instances of overcrowding in slums may be found in almost all large towns of recent growth. On the whole, it is probably true that changes in housing since Partition have affected Africans for the worse rather than for the better even after allowing for the very marked improvement that has taken place in some areas.

Health has also been greatly affected by the develop-

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Housing of Africans in Nairobi to the Native Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council of Nairobi, 1941, p. 2.

ment of modern communications. In tropical Africa in former days travel was slow, difficult, and often dangerous. Except in the open savanna region south of the Sahara and north of the tropical forest there was no area of considerable and widespread trade to tempt men to travel far and often from their homes. The slave trade, though important both in East and West Africa, left large areas almost untouched, and was not conducted on any scale comparable with modern trade. Nor, of course, did it enjoy modern facilities of quick and easy transport. The modern tropical African economy has brought about a new situation in no way comparable with anything that previously existed. Trains, motor-cars, lorries and bicycles have made travel easier, cheaper and quicker. The suppression of the slave trade and tribal war has made it safe. At the same time new and very strong economic forces have caused many hundreds of thousands of people every year to leave their homes in search of work—on plantations or at centres of industry or trade. This increased movement of people has very greatly aided the spread of disease. Many of those who travel in search of work are undernourished on a journey which may frequently expose them to kinds of infection unknown in their own villages, and against which their bodies are therefore unlikely to have developed any power of resistance. They are thus more likely than the permanent inhabitants of the country through which they pass to become ill, and, because they are travellers, to carry and spread infection along their route.

That this does in fact happen is borne out by the annual reports of medical departments in almost every African country. Thus in Uganda:

The spread of relapsing fever to areas not previously infested . . . continues to present a serious problem. Present opinion tends to the belief that the tick is being spread over the country by the migrations of labourers entering the territory from Ruanda-Urundi and the Belgian Congo. Govern-

ment is planning the provision of camps for the use of this labour at points of entry into the territory and on the roads they normally travel along, to places of employment. When these camps are established the medical department propose to introduce disinfestation of the personal belongings of these immigrants and it is hoped by these measures that the risk of the spread of ticks will be removed or reduced.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in Tanganyika the movement of labourers is thought to assist the spread of sleeping sickness.

The occurrence of twenty-seven cases at Babati, a European settled area in the Mbulu District, attributed to immigration of labour on foot from the Western Province makes it essential to keep a constant watch for new cases arising far from the sites of known infection, and to do all we can to prevent the passage of human beings carrying trypanosomes in their blood from known infected areas through or to areas where the tsetse fly is present.<sup>2</sup>

It must also be noted that the actual conditions of travel often assist the spread of infection. Travel by train or lorry by the lowest class means in most cases sitting for hours in crowded and close contact with other people. Under these conditions carriers of infected ticks, fleas or lice are especially liable to transfer them, and the infection they carry, to other people.

The growth of trade has also tended greatly to increase the danger from plague, especially in African sea and lake ports. Since the establishment of shipping on Lake Victoria Nyanza it has become the centre of plague infection in East Africa, and between 1912 and 1932 deaths from plague in Uganda totalled some 52,000.<sup>3</sup>

The effect of modern social and economic conditions on one other group of diseases must be specifically noted. Venereal diseases were certainly present in tropical Africa

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the Medical Department, Uganda, 1944, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the Medical Department, Tanganyika, 1943, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> See Worthington, *Science in Africa*, O.U.P., 1938, p. 537.

long before Partition. Early medical missionaries in Uganda, for instance, found venereal diseases well established. The source of infection was at that time commonly attributed to the Arabs, and it is probable that it was widely spread by the slave trade. But recent economic development has certainly worsened the situation. The migrant labour system<sup>1</sup> has meant that large numbers of men are at work far away from their homes for periods of months or years, and a proportion of them contract venereal disease which they bring back with them when they return to their villages. 'Again,' to quote Lord Hailey, 'the absence of large numbers of the male population from the villages in search of wages has encouraged a lower standard of morality in the rural areas, and has facilitated the spread of venereal diseases.'<sup>2</sup>

In all these ways African health problems have tended to become more serious and urgent of recent years, while economic development has not yet brought about any marked general advance in the standard of nutrition or in freedom from disease. It is true that much knowledge is available which, if applied, could greatly raise health standards, improve nutrition, and reduce disease. The factors which have hitherto prevented it from being applied on a sufficiently large scale will form the subject of the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> See Part I, Chapter XVI.

<sup>2</sup> Hailey, *An African Survey*, O.U.P., 1938. p. 1144.

## HEALTH OR DISEASE? PREVENTION OR CURE?

THE more that is learnt about health and disease, the clearer it becomes that the problem is far larger than merely to provide for the skilled treatment of cases of disease as they occur. These often have their roots far down in the economic and social organization of society, and the only permanent cure is to attack the social conditions which have caused them.

The extent to which the inhabitants of any country can succeed in reaching and maintaining better health standards depends on two main factors. In the first place knowledge is needed of the causes of disease, and this must include, not only knowledge about the actual sources of infection, but also of the conditions which favour or hinder their spread. Secondly there must be both the will and the means to apply knowledge which exists, in order to promote health.

While tropical Africa suffers to some extent from lack of sufficient knowledge to solve its health problems completely, it suffers yet more from lack of means to apply the knowledge which is already available. There is still a vast amount of preventable suffering: and although reliable statistics are unfortunately lacking except for small groups of the population, those which are available indicate a very unsatisfactory situation. Malaria is responsible for a high death-rate among very young children and for much ill health among adults; large areas of East Africa are uninhabitable because of the tsetse fly which carries the infection of sleeping sickness; helminthic diseases in East Africa are thought to affect as much as 90 per cent of the

entire population; in 1937 more than half a million Africans were known to be suffering from leprosy, and Worthington<sup>1</sup> puts the total of all cases, recorded and unrecorded, at a million. When we note also the very high death-rate of mothers and babies in childbirth, the prevalence of diseases due to tick and lice infections, together with the considerable toll taken by pneumonia, dysentery, smallpox, and other diseases of considerable importance, the health situation appears even more gloomy.

This, however, is not all. The incidence of disease is high, but the other factor of health—the standard of positive health enjoyed by people who are not suffering from any specific form of disease—would appear to be equally unsatisfactory, and to be mainly due to faulty feeding. In the absence of any reliable population statistics this factor is even more difficult to assess than the amount of disease, except for people who have come under skilled medical supervision for longish periods: such as, for instance, hospital patients, children in boarding schools, recruits for the army, and men seeking work in mines or plantations.

The hospital evidence is interesting. Many people are admitted to hospital who are so badly nourished, and therefore in so poor a state of general health, that normal medical treatment of their disease is insufficient to cure them. Hospital wards are crowded with patients for whom healing or recovery cannot take place until their bodies have been strengthened by better food.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in prisons, the health of men sentenced to hard labour is frequently so poor that 'hard labour' in any real sense of the term cannot be insisted on.

It may be argued that evidence of malnutrition taken from prisons and hospitals is valid only for those groups of

<sup>1</sup> Worthington, p. 548.

<sup>2</sup> See Cmd. 6050, Report on *Nutrition in the Colonial Empire*, H.M.S.O., 1939, p. 37.



the population most likely to be badly fed and not for the whole population. There is much evidence which is not open to the same objection. For example in boarding schools, where pupils normally have a more generous and varied diet than most of them enjoy at home, experience has shown that children gain weight rapidly in term time, but that when weighed again after a long holiday many pupils have suffered an absolute loss in weight. Records kept at the mines of southern Africa provide more valuable evidence. A considerable proportion of those who present themselves for work are rejected as medically unfit; while for those accepted it has often been found necessary to allow an initial period of lighter work until the good diet provided has strengthened their bodies. In spite of the hard work then expected the records show that labourers tend to gain in weight and general health.<sup>1</sup> Experience with African army recruits shows that many are undernourished on entry but improve rapidly in health, happiness and physical energy during the first few months on a fuller and more varied diet than any to which they had previously been regularly accustomed.<sup>2</sup>

These facts indicate that the normal diets of the peasant labouring population, though sufficient to maintain life, are often insufficient to maintain them in full health, and it thus becomes important to look for causes as a first step towards improving the situation.

There are, of course, certain causes of temporary food

<sup>1</sup> See Cmd. 6050, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Dr. H. C. Trowell, F.R.C.P., specialist physician at Mulago Hospital, Uganda, for further information on this point. He writes:

'As long as military doctors recognized only known deficiency states they found little severe malnutrition. When kwashiorkor and liver disease were recognized it was found that malnutrition was widespread and possibly incurable by diet in adult life, as the liver was permanently damaged.'

The liver disease referred to is commonly found among children in East Africa and is attributed to lack of sufficient protein in the diet.

shortage, such as bad harvests due to occasional drought, insect pests and plant disease, from which most countries suffer equally with tropical Africa. More important, however, are other causes, widespread in Africa, which can be removed only if the African peoples combine with their governments to take the necessary action. One such cause is undoubtedly the inefficiency by modern standards of vast numbers of primitive peasants with the result that the crop yields per acre of farmland are usually very low. The effect of this is most felt where there is a dense population and where the traditional method of shifting cultivation can no longer be properly practised, for most peasants have not yet adopted the custom of manuring their land. Under these conditions the soil quickly loses its fertility, crop yields tend to become even smaller, and soil erosion sets in—sometimes to such an extent that only subsoil is left behind. This process has already gone a long way in many parts of tropical Africa, and in such places the immediate problem is rather to maintain existing inadequate standards of diet than to raise the general level of nutrition.<sup>1</sup>

African food problems have also become more acute in some areas owing to the growth of the export trade in agricultural produce. Peasants have been encouraged to grow crops for export, and when these fetch high prices they may tend to concentrate too much on growing crops for cash and too little on growing food for themselves. Such cutting down of food production to the minimum, or below the minimum, makes the food position in some colonies extremely serious in times of bad trade when money is no longer available for the purchase of imported food-stuffs in sufficient quantities; or in times of drought when the limited amount of food crops grown may give poorer yields than expected.

A further very important factor is the migrant labour

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of tropical African agricultural and other allied problems see Part I, Chapters VII–XIII.

system. This has little effect on food production when labourers are absent from their homes only for a few months in the dry season, but if they are away during the farming season, as many of them are, food production is often very seriously affected and their families suffer from hunger. This point has been frequently stressed by students of modern African society, and it is illustrated by the following quotation taken from a report, dated 1939, of the Uganda Agricultural Survey Committee:

During the September Survey at Kasilang, at a time when there is plenty of cultivation to be done, over 11 per cent of the adult male population was away from the *atongole* in casual work. The families of those who were married (and the same is true of Aputon in May), were, without exception, in a disgraceful state of malnutrition. . . . These families were obviously living under famine conditions . . . the loss of one working unit is a very serious matter of family economics.<sup>1</sup>

One other factor is of great importance. It is easy so to concentrate on food problems as to forget that an ample and pure water supply is also essential for adequate nutrition. This, too, is lacking in many parts of tropical Africa especially towards the end of the dry season when many households depend for their supply on some distant and muddy waterhole or well.

The points so far discussed are all primarily factors which tend to limit quantity: and while it is not true that all peoples in all parts of Africa are short of food,<sup>2</sup> enough people are seriously affected for actual food shortage to form a serious problem. This is further aggravated by the low nutritional value of the diets of most of the poorer people. Quality as well as quantity is often lacking.

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Survey Committee, *Nutrition Report No. 2*—Teso, Uganda, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> See Worthington, p. 583, who notes that although malnutrition is undoubtedly a serious problem, a high level of physique and health is sometimes attained by individual Africans on diets of extreme simplicity. In this respect, he says, Europeans may have something to learn as well as to teach.

In Africa, as in other tropical countries, most people eat a considerable bulk of cooked, starchy food, which is obtained from some staple crop such as maize, millet, yams, rice, cassava, bananas, or plantains. This is eaten with a sauce made from vegetables and condiments. Animal foods such as meat, milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and fish are usually eaten only in small quantities, if at all, and are often also of poor quality. Some green vegetables and fruits are eaten when they are available, but in many places they can be grown only at certain seasons of the year.

Experts in nutrition do not believe that diets of this sort can maintain the body at a high level of health and energy. They contain an excess of bulky carbohydrates and much too little of the more valuable types of food. The Report on *Nutrition in the Colonial Empire*, after discussing a good deal of the available evidence, draws this conclusion:

It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that while a diet of little or nothing but cereals may keep body and soul together, it cannot suffice for full efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

Experience gained in feeding labourers supports this belief, for the many employers who have experimented with better diets report both a general increase of health and efficiency and a lowering of the sickness rate.<sup>2</sup> And it is certain that what improved diets can do for paid labourers they can also do for the peasant living at home. The problem is to encourage him to provide for himself and his family a diet similar to those now provided by the better employers of labour.

The problem is a complicated one, and the people's co-operation in attempts to solve it cannot be assumed. Men suffering from some degree of malnutrition are not

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 6050, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> The standard diet for unskilled labour in government employment in Uganda, and the improved scales of diet given to their employees by the Rhokana Corporation of Northern Rhodesia are

necessarily conscious of it, and, even if they are, are not always willing to make the effort to provide extra food and change their food habits. Thus the Northern Rhodesian Committee on Nutrition remarked that to produce a more liberal and varied diet 'native peasants will have to work harder . . . and they are not likely to do so voluntarily until the desire for a better diet becomes almost intolerable'. The Committee notes an instance of the people of the north-eastern plateau being better fed when government took action to force them to cultivate more root crops as an anti-famine measure during locust invasions. It notes, too, that when the locust danger was over and government pressure removed, the people went back to their old unsatisfactory level of feeding with seasonal hungry periods.

There is a more serious difficulty. Nowhere in the world, either in temperate or tropical countries, has it ever been an easy task to persuade the common people to change their customary diet, however clearly nutritional experts may have been able to demonstrate the need for change. What has been found difficult in countries where nearly

given below for purposes of comparison. Both diets quoted were those in force for 1939.

UGANDA GOVERNMENT		RHOKANA CORPORATION	
	<i>Daily</i>		<i>Daily</i>
Maize flour	1'5 lb.	Maize meal	1 lb.
Beans	4 oz.	Beans	4'5 oz.
Groundnuts	2 oz.	Groundnuts	1 oz.
Salt	0'5 oz.	Salt	0'5 oz.
		Meat	12 oz.
		Vegetables and fruit	6'7 oz.
		Wheat roll	6 oz.
		Fat	0'7 oz.
		Native beer	20 oz.

The Uganda figures are taken from the *Nutrition Report No. 3—Unskilled Labour*, by the Uganda Agricultural Survey Committee, which gives an account of the testing out of improved diets for Banyarua labourers. The Rhokana Corporation diet is given in Appendix 5 of the Report on *Nutrition in the Colonial Empire*.

everyone is literate is doubly hard in the vast areas of the tropics where education is still the privilege of a small minority: and where, unfortunately, many tribes also have taboos on certain valuable foodstuffs such as fish and eggs, and will not willingly remove deficiencies in their diet by eating them. In a report on the Kikuyu of Kenya Sir John Orr and Dr. Gilks state that although the Kikuyu are large owners of livestock:

Beef may be almost entirely discounted from the diet; game, fish, birds, and eggs are ignored and the eating of goats and sheep is almost confined to the old men. . . . It should be noted, however, that although so little meat is eaten the natives possess large herds of goats. These are used mainly as currency, instead of as a supply of milk and meat.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly the Kenya Land Commission reported on what it considered a 'preposterous situation' in which 3,000,000 people owned 6,000,000 cattle, and probably many more sheep and goats, yet lacked milk for many months in the year and ate little meat. 'In the midst of plenty the natives in pastoral and semi-pastoral areas are, in fact, living under conditions of extreme poverty.' Yet 'the native reserves of Kenya contain some of the finest dairying land in the world, and should be capable, not only of providing ample supplies of meat and milk for their inhabitants, but also of exporting large quantities of dairy produce'.<sup>2</sup>

Under circumstances such as these it is obvious that colonial governments cannot solve African food and health problems merely by administrative action. They can be solved only by enlisting the co-operation of educated Africans, especially women, in educating others to the need for change. In tropical Africa women in the villages are not only responsible for the preparation and cooking

<sup>1</sup> *Physique and Health of Two African Tribes*, Med. Res. C., 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 4556, *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, H.M.S.O., 1934, pp. 495 and 499.

of food, which in themselves are very important factors in promoting good feeding, but they are also very frequently responsible for actual food production on the farms. They do most of the work of growing food crops, and to a large extent decide what crops should be cultivated. The importance of their education in matters concerned with food is therefore self-evident, and it provides one of the strongest arguments for doing everything possible to increase the number of girls who attend school.

There are other aspects of the general problem which present fewer difficulties. Research into existing African diets with a view to obtaining a clearer picture of their shortcomings is obviously important, and although some work has been attempted much still remains to be done. It includes the examination of different varieties of the various staple foods and of the large number of vegetables used in the various relishes in order to find out their relative food values. When exact knowledge of this kind has been obtained it becomes possible to state what is lacking in the common diet of any particular village or tribe, and then to decide along what lines improvement of the diet may be most suitably achieved. Worthington suggests that such research could best be undertaken by special teams of workers, each including a doctor, a biochemist, a social anthropologist, and an agriculturalist working together for, say, a year in areas specially selected to present a few major problems.<sup>1</sup>

When this has been done food producers can be encouraged to grow more of the foods they need for a better-balanced diet. In many cases this may mean merely the growing of more of some existing crops and less of others: but in some areas it may be desirable to introduce food crops hitherto unknown. Sir Daniel Hall,<sup>2</sup> writing in 1936,

<sup>1</sup> Worthington, p. 583. Research of this kind is now being done.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *The Improvement of Native Agriculture in Relation to Population and Public Health*, p. 78.

stresses the need in many parts of Africa for the growing of more legumes, in the interests both of soil conservation—through improvement of crop rotations—and of nutrition—because of the high fat and protein content of such legumes as the soya bean and groundnut. He notes, however, that the strains of soya bean which have been successful in Asia and the United States of America often do not grow well in Africa, and that experiments are necessary to develop a plant which will flourish under African conditions. Soya beans are, in fact, now being grown in East Africa on a considerable scale.

Action along these lines covers only one part of the problem. We have noted already that it is always very difficult to get *any* people to change its food customs, and that peasants may not easily be persuaded to grow more food and make full use of available supplies of meat, fish and milk. But people must be not only willing but also *able* to grow the food they need. Yet in fact the most common African method of agriculture is quite unsuited to produce adequate food under modern conditions. Shifting cultivation was successful when land was plentiful and used only for producing food. Manuring was unnecessary, because new land could be cleared for farming when existing farms lost their fertility. Now, with export crops occupying vast additional acreages, land in many areas is no longer plentiful, and shifting cultivation can no longer be practised properly. Improved farming methods based on the use of composts, manures and rotations have, indeed, been developed for some areas, and where they have proved their value are quickly being adopted by progressive African farmers. But the development of new agricultural techniques and the education of peasants in their use are necessarily slow processes. Meanwhile the soil in most places yearly becomes poorer, and it is more and more difficult to obtain good yields of crops of high nutritional value. Thus the desirable improvement in diet will depend,



among other factors, on the speed with which peasants can be shown new agricultural methods and persuaded to adopt them.

Thus to the very large extent that general health standards, and hence greater resistance to disease, depend on better feeding, a realistic health policy must first and foremost concentrate on economic problems—on better farming and better animal husbandry—and on educating the people to modify their present food habits as they become more able to supply themselves with better and more varied foodstuffs. To this need purely medical work, though of very great importance, must take second place.

Some of the reasons for this were made clear in the previous chapter. The spread of disease is due, not merely to the existence of sources of infection, but also to the conditions under which people work and live. With improved housing substituted for huts of the usual mud and wattle type, tick and flea-borne diseases would attack many fewer people because their insect carriers would no longer enjoy ideal breeding places close to man. A pure water supply, whether piped or from properly protected wells, would greatly reduce the amount of water-borne diseases by keeping infection from the water people drink. Plentiful water, soap, and sufficient wealth to enable people to possess a change of clothes, would promote habits of cleanliness and lessen diseases caused by ticks and lice. But all these things become practicable for most people only as they learn new skills and apply more efficient labour to their land and its products.

Until this happens hospital and dispensary treatment of individual sufferers can do little more than relieve a small fraction of existing pain and misery without doing anything much to remove the real causes of the ills it seeks to cure. Hospitals and skilled doctors are so few that they can accommodate and treat only a small proportion of

the people who now contract disease:<sup>1</sup> and, again, until tropical African countries become much more prosperous the medical and health services must remain starved of needed buildings, staff and equipment because the people who need them are too poor to provide them for themselves.

The place of economic progress as a priority health measure can be even more clearly understood if we consider the developments in controlling disease that have been worked out recently under the stimulus of war. New insecticides, such as D.D.T. and gammaxane, open up new prospects of the cheap and widespread control of some of the most destructive insect-borne diseases of the tropics. By using them it may well be possible in the near future to halve the present death-rate of infants and greatly to reduce it among adults. Success of this kind would be followed by a steep rise in the size of tropical populations which would immediately cause vast economic and social problems in those areas which are already overpopulated at the present level of economic production. If these peoples do not learn improved methods of using their land and labour, any great success in controlling the diseases which at present limit their numbers is likely only to substitute death from starvation for death from disease. There is no

<sup>1</sup> The following paragraph from the *Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies* is worth quoting here:

‘In Great Britain, we note that the ratio of doctors to inhabitants is approaching 1 to 1,000, and the number of doctors is likely to be increased as a result of the programme of social reform on which the country is now engaged. We cannot hope to see a similar standard attained in the Colonies, but some of the figures of the provision made there are of interest. In Malaya the ratio was one doctor to every ten thousand people. At the other extreme is Nigeria, where the ratio is one doctor for every hundred thousand, and in certain districts one doctor for an area containing one million people. It is enough to say that there is, in the great majority of Colonies, an urgent need for the expansion of the existing medical staff, and of the ancillary health services for whose training and supervision the medical staff must be responsible.’

short cut to better living. It can only be attained on the sound foundation of more efficient production and greater prosperity.

While this is true, and while the immediate need is to increase production, this cannot by itself guarantee better living standards. The key factor is not merely increased production, but *increased production*, especially of food, *per head of population*. By wise conservation and development of tropical Africa's natural resources it may be possible greatly to raise output during the next few decades. But if this coincides with an even greater increase in population the standard of living must fall.

In the past the size of populations has been limited by premature death caused by preventable disease and war. If these controls are even partially weakened populations may increase very rapidly indeed. This happened in Britain in the nineteenth century. It had no ill effects on the standard of living because production increased even more rapidly, and because it was possible to 'export' surplus population to people the empty lands in the Dominions and the United States, and to import food. Moreover, the high rate of increase was not maintained indefinitely. Having attained a high standard of living people have wished to keep it, and have taken steps—through later marriage and by birth control after marriage—to limit the number of their children.

Control of disease in other, non-European, countries has had less satisfactory results, for it has not been followed by the substitution of other checks. Their populations have therefore tended to increase faster than the means to maintain them at a satisfactory standard of living. Between 1921 and 1941 the population of India increased by over a quarter. During the same period the intelligent, industrious and well-governed people of the Indian State of Travancore increased from 4,000,000 to 6,000,000. The effect is noted in the Census Report of 1941, which stated

that in the lowland agricultural areas the increasing density of population was reducing the people to 'a level of sheer despondency'. This was not surprising since there were from 1,800 to 2,400 people on each square mile of land, and, in spite of their distress, births still greatly outnumbered deaths. 'Nature obviously does not begin to exercise effective control over the inordinate rate of growth of the population till the people have been reduced to an extreme condition of misery and weakness.'<sup>1</sup> This stage was reached in 1943 when there was widespread starvation.

We do not know how fast African populations are growing, for only in rare instances are reliable statistics available. Most people believe that they are now rapidly increasing in some areas at least, and that more effective control of disease will lead to further rapid increase. This is all the more alarming since tropical Africa is predominantly an agricultural area, and is unlikely to develop—as Britain and India have done—an export trade in manufactured goods which can be exchanged for food imports.

There is, therefore, a danger that a successful health policy may lead to such a growth of population that it may more than offset the benefits that might otherwise be enjoyed as the result of better farming and a more economic use of cattle. If that happens African living standards will be depressed below even their present unsatisfactory level. They can only be raised permanently if the rate of increase in population can be kept below that of economic production. This means control, which in Britain has been applied by means of delayed marriage and birth control after marriage. These controls have not been applied in India with the result that in spite of a vast increase of production millions of people now live near the borderline of starva-

<sup>1</sup> This quotation, and a good many of the facts relating to India which I have mentioned, are taken from an article, 'The Health of India', written by Sir John Megaw and published in the *British Medical Journal*, 9 March 1946.

tion. Is that all we can hope for from social and economic planning in Africa? No other fate can finally be expected unless education of the people in these matters goes hand in hand with the successful application of health policies.

What has been written above provides the background against which medical and health policies should be framed and must be judged. Even with the help made available under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts the resources which can be collected to tackle the health problem in these wide aspects are much too small. The health situation needs attacking from all angles—economics, the prevention of disease (which must include also the health education of the people), the treatment and cure of those who fall ill, and control of population increase. Government revenues cannot provide staff and equipment to deal adequately with all these, and nor can the promised help from Britain. Some order of priority is therefore desirable so as to ensure that each shilling spent has the maximum possible effect in helping onwards the long-term solution of the problem.

It is just on this point that difficulty occurs, for people hold many different opinions about what should be done. Many doctors, for instance, who have devoted their lives to the cure of disease, urge the need for more hospitals and more skilled doctors to relieve the suffering they see around them. Their demand is powerfully aided by the claims of the educated classes—the most vocal part of the population—for ever-better standards of medical treatment. They are further aided by the demands of educated Africans for first-class medical training which will enable them to qualify to work on equal terms with European doctors: for medical training at that high level can only be given in large hospitals, costly to equip and almost equally costly to staff and to maintain.

Medical policy based on these considerations has obviously much to be said for it, and ideally it is highly desir-

able, but its *immediate* desirability must be judged in the light of the general economic situation and by the fact that if it is accepted it meets the needs only of a small minority of the total population at the expense of the majority. By providing for the few at the highest level, the many, who have the greater need, are necessarily left with less.

One alternative is to practise strict economy within the existing hospital system and to concentrate more of the available funds in spreading over the countryside a network of dispensaries staffed by less well-qualified orderlies and health workers so that some measure of medical treatment, admittedly well below the best, might soon become available to everyone. Those who hold this view claim that it has the additional advantage that each of these small but numerous dispensaries would become foci not only for treatment, but for the spread of knowledge of hygiene and practical measures for the safeguarding of health. It might also be possible to spend considerably more than at present on preventive measures. One of the most important of these is the provision of pure water supplies by sinking properly protected wells and boreholes; another, a drive to establish better sanitation in the villages; and a third might well be investigations into the possibility of better housing, cheaply constructed of materials locally available.

And yet can even this policy really reach the root of the evil and provide a permanent solution? Lord Hailey sums up the present situation in the following words:

... in few rural areas does there appear to be any system of detection of disease by qualified persons that can be said to be effective. Opinions with regard to the incidence of the more typical African diseases may vary, but it is clear that in many rural areas the mortality from malaria is high and that sources of malarial infection exist in most villages; that intermittent fevers are prevalent; that helminthic diseases are almost universal, the filthy state of the villages being conducive to their spread; and that few village children are free from sores, and

many adults are under-nourished and have little stamina. An examination of a typical Central African village would show that the sick, especially old persons and children, are neglected or unwisely treated, the elements of hygiene are lacking, the wearing of unhygienic and dirty clothing is usual, food is prepared in dirty vessels, flies swarm on garbage thrown near the village, and huts are often unswept and infested with parasites. The conditions of urban compounds are often criticized, but they may be compared favourably with those in rural areas. Little can be done to improve such conditions until the Africans themselves are conscious of a need for betterment, or at least until the native authorities themselves are aware of their responsibilities, and the health services have sufficient staff at their disposal to enforce sanitary measures.<sup>1</sup>

How are the millions of Africans in the villages thus to be made 'conscious of a need for betterment' and how are they to be assisted to achieve it? Certainly these aims cannot be achieved if the greater part of government resources is spent in meeting the demands of minorities in the chief centres of population. The crux of the health problem is the backwardness of the great majority of the people who live in the rural areas. The most pressing need is that they should become willing to co-operate in measures to improve their own situation. Measures which do not have this as their aim are merely palliatives which leave the basic causes of poverty, malnutrition and ill health untouched. At present the people use out-of-date, inefficient agricultural methods which are destroying their soil; many migrate temporarily in search of work as unskilled labourers under a system which gives the majority little chance, even if they wish it, of becoming skilled and efficient workmen at higher wages. The low wages received do little to offset the socially harmful results of the migrant labour system in the villages. Poverty due to these and other causes leaves the people both unable and unwilling to help themselves, and sometimes even unwilling to be helped, if some effort of their own is also required. Poverty,

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, pp. 1205-6.

too, is the underlying cause of conditions of housing and malnutrition which directly lead to a vast amount of preventable disease and human suffering. European staffs in the tropics are much too costly by African and even by European economic standards for them to be endlessly multiplied to deal with African problems in detail. The white man's, and the educated African's, most important function must therefore be the training of backward Africans to assist themselves. More and more education must be provided. It is important in two ways. It is a powerful force in creating new needs and in arousing the desire to have better living conditions. It also provides the knowledge by means of which many present barriers which block the way to African advancement—towards prosperity and self-government no less than towards better health and freedom from disease—can be broken down.



## EDUCATION: THE PRESENT SITUATION

IN the tropical Africa of former days, before economic and social conditions were altered by the white man, African education, like African agriculture, was suited to the needs of the people. Except where they had been converted to Islam no one could read or write, and there was therefore very little in the way of formal teaching. But the young were given, nevertheless, an education which fitted them for the conditions of tribal life. Skill in crafts was thus handed on, together with traditions and customs and a sufficient knowledge of the complex system of rights and duties which ordered tribal society. Education was usually rounded off by initiation ceremonies or 'regimental' training which marked the entry into full adult status in the community.

While African conditions changed little from one generation to another, and all religious, social and economic activities centred on the tribe, an education which aimed at fitting the young to fulfil their duties as members of the tribe was satisfactory. But the arrival of Europeans began a period of rapid change. The activities of missionaries, traders and settlers, and the setting up of colonial governments, gave Africans many contacts outside the narrow limits of tribal life, and the traditional type of education in no way helped them to deal with these contacts. It gave no guidance to those who left their villages in search of temporary paid work which brought them into contact with men of other tribes. Nor did it help the peasant. It taught him a system of agriculture fitted only to produce the food required by a not very thickly settled population,

but quite unfitted to bear the strain of providing crops for the export market as well. It did not assist him with the knowledge necessary for the grading and marketing of his produce to the best advantage, nor did it help him to understand how prices are fixed in the world market into which he had entered. It also failed to qualify him to seize the new economic opportunities which arose from the demand for clerks and artisans in the service of governments and in trade and industry.

Tribal education thus became less and less able to help men to live satisfactory lives under the new conditions that were fast developing. It was further weakened by the work of the missionaries, who were foremost both in destroying education as they found it and in building up something to take its place. They worked against it on religious and moral grounds, for it taught many things, such as witchcraft and polygamy, which Christians believed were wrong. Attacks on these, however, meant in fact attacking the whole system, for in tribal education, religion, economics, and social obligation were all parts of one complex pattern of rights and duties. Thus the replacement of a belief in the tribal gods by a belief in Christianity meant more than a change of religion. It meant breaking with tribal tradition and custom in many other aspects of life.

While Christian missionaries thus actively attacked tribal religion, and therefore also the existing system of tribal education, they used education of a European type as a most powerful tool in spreading and establishing their own. This, of course, was their chief aim, but they realized that much more than merely oral instruction in the Christian beliefs was necessary. Literacy, which involved the teaching of reading and writing, was highly desirable as an aid to the teaching of religion and the reading of the Bible. It also enabled Africans to take the first step towards a better understanding of the new world into which they

were entering; and to this curriculum was added, for as many pupils as possible, education in English, mathematics, and other academic subjects, which enabled them to take posts as clerks and teachers; or in crafts so that they could qualify for work as artisans.

Education as it thus grew up under mission control has been frequently criticized, and its products compared unfavourably with those of tribal education of the old kind. There is, in fact, a tendency to hold mission education responsible for many of those evils of the present social situation which should more justly be blamed on recent and very rapid economic change. There are, no doubt, unsatisfactory products of mission schools; but is not the cause of their unsatisfactoriness to be found, when it exists, not in the education they have received, but in the fact that their education has qualified them for positions outside tribal society, where they may lack the traditions and well-established customs which would normally guide their conduct?

Another criticism of mission education carries more weight, but it applies to conditions already past rather than to the present. The early missionaries, in common with other Europeans working in Africa, judged the value of African customs and institutions by what they had known in Europe, and their chief aim was to bring them as closely as possible to what was accepted as good among white people. Limited only by what was practicable, they therefore tried to introduce into Africa for Africans the same education that was provided for English children in England. British history and geography were taught while African history and geography were neglected, and there were 'at least some instances in which the pupil was taught the botany of European, not African plants'.<sup>1</sup>

To this extent early mission education failed to pay sufficient attention to African needs and to the African situa-

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 1280.

tion, but it was not a failing peculiar to missions. The idea that what was good in Europe must therefore also be good under very different circumstances in tropical Africa was common to the age. Modern educational policy in Africa has been developed on a basis of knowledge and experience which was necessarily lacking in the early days of African development.

Except in certain special areas, such as the Moslem emirates of Northern Nigeria, to which missionaries are denied free access owing to the treaty rights of the Emirs, the colonial governments at first took little direct action themselves to provide education. As in England a hundred years ago they were content to give money help and to claim a measure of control through a system of government inspection. It is only in recent years that they have begun to establish their own training centres for teachers and their own schools, mainly for higher and secondary education. They still work chiefly through the missions, and increased government interest in education has usually taken the form of larger grants to missions than in the past.

Local governments, usually called native administrations, also provide schools in some areas, notably in Nigeria and Tanganyika. Such native administration schools are most numerous in the Moslem areas of Northern Nigeria where missionary activity has been strictly limited.

An exact picture of recent progress and of the present state of education in British tropical Africa is difficult to obtain. Owing to the reduction of office and administrative staffs during the six years of war, departmental annual reports no longer contain all the usual detailed statistics. The Table on p. 35 is therefore based on information provided in Lord Hailey's *An African Survey* for the years 1935-6, but the figures given are still useful, for educational expansion has necessarily been greatly slowed down by the war. The chief changes have been in the direction of

AFRICAN EDUCATION, 1935-6  
(Based on Tables X and XI of Hailey's *An African Survey*)

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Est. of Population</i>	<i>Govt.</i>	<i>Pupils in Schools</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage below above St. III St. VI (figures not available)</i>	
			<i>Aided</i>	<i>Unaided</i>		<i>below St. III</i>	<i>above St. VI</i>
N. Rhodesia	1,378,000	1,543	25,515	82,990	110,048	94·8 (figures not available)	0·1
Nyasaland	1,603,257	48	57,014	137,780	194,842	94·8 (figures not available)	0·1
Tanganyika	5,138,080	8,105	19,785	195,951	225,841	94·8 (figures not available)	0·1
Uganda	3,661,099	505	39,359	233,307	273,171	97·0 (figures not available)	0·1
Kenya	3,084,351	5,079	40,396	55,245	100,720	96·8 (figures not available)	0·2
Nigeria	19,106,636	16,052	64,459	136,299	216,810	81·8 (figures not available)	1·1
Gold Coast	3,230,550	5,930	40,366	17,170	63,466	97·0 (figures not available)	0·1
Sierra Leone	1,890,000	649	14,915	3,338	18,902	73·4 (figures not available)	5·4

increases in secondary education, in the education of girls, and in the number of pupils attending government or government-aided schools, rather than any noteworthy increase in the total number of children attending schools of all kinds. These and other points will be discussed below on the basis, not only of Lord Hailey's figures, but also in the light of information given in colonial departmental reports for subsequent years.

The figures given in the table clearly show that in 1936 provision for the education of Africans in British colonies was severely limited, both in quantity and quality. That is still true to-day. Even the latest figures, where they are available, fall far short of minimum requirements. If we accept as the minimum aim six years' efficient primary education for every child,<sup>1</sup> together with secondary education to school certificate standard for one child in ten, this would mean that probably some 12.5 per cent of the total population would be in primary schools and a further 1.25 per cent in secondary schools at any one time. If these figures are worked out and compared with the actual enrolments in government and government-aided schools the contrast is most marked:

#### AFRICAN EDUCATION, 1943

(The 'actual' figures are based on data given in the annual reports of colonial departments of education for 1943.)

	<i>Primary</i>		<i>Secondary</i>	
	<i>Ideal</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Ideal</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Tanganyika	650,000	48,000	65,000	823
Uganda	450,000	73,279	45,000	1,907
N. Rhodesia	170,000	93,505	17,000	52
Nyasaland	200,000	61,251	40,000	46
Nigeria	2,400,000	85,000 <sup>2</sup> (1942)	240,000	(not avail-
Gold Coast	400,000	60,000 <sup>2</sup>	40,000	able)

<sup>1</sup> It is very doubtful whether even this can be accepted as a practicable minimum if it is intended to implement it during the next thirty or forty years. See p. 74 for the situation in Uganda, which is in

The 'actual' figures refer to pupils in government or government-aided schools only. In some territories large additional numbers of pupils are receiving some sort of instruction in unaided, uninspected schools, but the standard of instruction is normally<sup>3</sup> so low and the time spent at school so short that it would be more misleading to include than to exclude them.

If the quantity of educational provision is thus far below the need, its quality also leaves very much to be desired. Attendances are poor and in many territories average only 75 per cent.<sup>4</sup> A very high percentage of pupils leave school for good after two or three years. Thus in Uganda there were in 1943 over 28,000 children in Primary Standard I, under 8,000 in Standard IV, and 2,897 in Standard VI. Only 1907 children in the whole territory were attending secondary schools, and of these only 78 were in their sixth and final year. Yet even so Uganda compares favourably with other East African territories. Secondary school pupils in Tanganyika numbered only 823, in Nyasaland only 46, and in Northern Rhodesia 52, and none of these pupils had then reached the highest secondary class. On the West Coast, where education has been longer established, the situation is somewhat better, though still unsatisfactory: and it includes Northern Nigeria which has a total population of about 10,000,000, a school enrolment of some 25,000 a less unenviable position educationally than any other East African territory.

It is possible that quicker and more generally beneficial progress might be achieved by limiting the initial aim for the majority of children to four years only, with an adequate follow-up with suitable literature, etc., for those who have left, on the lines of the *Desa* school system adopted by the Dutch colonial government in the East Indies.

<sup>2</sup> The 'actual' figures for primary education on the Gold Coast and in Nigeria are approximate only. The reports of these colonies state no definite figure. Statistical information about African education is almost completely lacking in the Kenya report.

<sup>3</sup> There are a few excellent schools of this type.

<sup>4</sup> In Nyasaland in 1943 enrolment in aided schools was 61,251, and the average attendance 45,292.

(1942) and, at present, only one school which gives a full secondary education.

In many of the existing schools the teaching is also of very poor quality, and some light on this can be obtained by studying the qualifications of the teachers. Thus Nyasaland, with over 170,000 pupils attending some kind of school in 1943, had only 1,180 certificated teachers employed in the territory, and it is worth noting that in the same year only 42 pupils succeeded in obtaining their Standard VI Primary Leaving Certificate. In the unassisted schools of Nigeria, attended by nearly 220,000 children in 1942, only 497 out of a total of 10,436 teachers were certificated.

These figures give an idea of the general situation, but it is important also to remember that the education of girls lags far behind that of the boys. Girls provide from 10 per cent to 30 per cent of the total enrolment in the primary schools. In the whole of East Africa in 1943 there were only two girls in the top classes of secondary schools. On the West Coast the situation is somewhat better. There in 1941 eleven girls on the Gold Coast and eight in Nigeria gained the Cambridge School Certificate.

These figures have not been quoted in any spirit of criticism. They have been achieved in spite of almost incredible difficulties of staffing and finance and, in the early days of African education, of apathy and mistrust among the African peoples. They represent many years of hard and self-sacrificing work by the missions acting as voluntary educational agencies, and it is only comparatively recently that they have begun to receive any considerable financial aid from the colonial governments.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, necessary clearly to understand the limitations of

<sup>1</sup> In 1936 the colonial government's contribution to educational activities in Northern Rhodesia amounted to under £25,000. This figure had risen to nearly £130,000 in 1943. The population of the colony is approximately 1,400,000.



existing achievement in order to assess the prospects of further progress.

What are these prospects? Certainly they are brighter now than ever before. In Britain and in Africa it is fully realized that the voluntary effort of the missions must be greatly aided and supplemented by the colonial governments. Also, Britain, through the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, has declared her willingness to give money grants to speed up educational development to a level which many colonies, with only small financial resources of their own, could not otherwise attain. Hence poverty should hinder progress less in the future than it has in the past.

A further great advantage is that the urgency of the need for much greater educational provision has recently become more clearly defined. The British government, and the British people, have now fully accepted the ideal that the colonial peoples should govern themselves. But to make this ideal practicable and beneficial a tremendous increase in education at all levels has somehow to be achieved. Effective self-government depends on the colonial populations attaining a much higher annual output of wealth, both to raise the standard of living of individuals and to finance social and educational services at a sufficiently high level in the self-governing states of the future. It is abundantly clear to students of the present African social and economic situation that the greatest single retarding factor in development has been inability to provide for the effective education of the African masses. Education is needed to provide them with the knowledge and the will to increase the efficiency of their work, and from this aspect alone a wide and rapid expansion of education is urgently necessary. Self-government, however, also implies the holding of political rights. If these are to be restricted to a small minority there is the danger of abuse by a politically privileged class using its power to further its particu-

lar minority interest. If, on the other hand, political rights are given to all it is essential that all children should receive at least an efficient primary education. Nor can secondary and higher education be neglected. It is impossible to extend primary education on sound lines without a corresponding extension of secondary schools, from which more teachers for the primary schools must be recruited. This expansion at the secondary level in turn presupposes a need for secondary school teachers, which can only be met by providing better facilities for higher education. Yet a sufficient supply of teachers, although most important and quite beyond the present capacity of secondary and higher education to provide, is only one of many functions of post-primary education. The number of Africans fully qualified by European standards for professional and technical posts in medicine, engineering, commerce, agriculture, animal husbandry, law, and social welfare—the list is endless—is small and far below minimum needs. These can only be made good by a vast expansion of education at the secondary and higher levels.

The declared aim of self-government implies a great increase in the existing provision of education on yet another ground. 'Self-government' after all implies that there is already developed a social and political unit to which the grant of self-government can be made.<sup>1</sup> But at present the colonies of British tropical Africa are artificial creations of the white man, and their continued existence as political units depends on external power. Most of their people lack that sense of a strong and overriding loyalty to the colony which would, in times of need, enable them to subordinate to it their narrower loyalties to family, clan, tribe, religion, and class. Such a loyalty is, indeed, developing among the educated few, and various influences are at work to strengthen it, but it is unlikely to become effective.

<sup>1</sup> Is it not precisely because no such unit exists in India that such difficulty was found in granting her full responsible self-government?

among the mass of the people until education is more widespread and until, above all, the teaching of some *lingua franca* has broken down the existing barriers of language. A wider loyalty can only flourish on the basis of common understanding of common interests.

Thus the ideal of social and economic development and the promise of self-government, if they are to mean anything more than vague hopes for the distant future, provide the strongest possible reasons for speeding up educational development. The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts provide some, at least, of the necessary additional financial help. But there are other and less favourable factors to be considered.

First, there is the problem of how to accommodate greatly increased numbers while at the same time raising the level of the standard of teaching, for it is not sufficient merely to increase the number of children attending school. On that basis territories such as Nyasaland, which has already some 170,000 children at school, are well on the way to apparently satisfactory achievement, though others still lag far behind. But it is much more urgent, and more difficult, to enable many more children than at present to complete full primary and secondary courses. Thus, to mention Nyasaland again, we have already noted that out of the 170,000 children attending school only forty-two satisfactorily *completed* the full primary course in 1943. As for secondary education, the figures given earlier in this chapter show that scarcely anywhere have the schools been able to produce annually more than a mere handful of pupils who have completed the full course, while Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia still lacked in 1944 even one school which taught to the full secondary level. The output from the top of the primary schools needs stepping up to fifty or a hundred times its present volume, and from the top of the secondary schools by anything up to a thousand-fold or more.

This enormous task has to be attempted under conditions of great difficulty. In tropical Africa, more even than in present-day Britain, the child's social environment is subject to rapid change. Education, therefore, has to teach the child how to live not only in conditions which now exist, but in those which it is hoped will develop, and its further task is to qualify him to help changes in the existing environment to come about. Thus for many children a good deal of what is taught in school is not supported by what they see actually practised in ordinary village life. The child learns to read and write: its parents are probably illiterate. It learns some of the principles of hygiene which its parents neither practise nor understand. It may even accept religious beliefs which its parents do not share. Thus while it is still at an early stage of development education is bound to cause social strains and tensions between those it educates and their environment, and there is no doubt that many of the criticisms sometimes made of mission education are based on symptoms of tensions of this kind. They can be cured only by a wider spread of educational opportunities. Meanwhile, African education, even more than education in European countries, suffers from the handicap of an environment which hampers rather than aids the effectiveness of school work.

It is possible to attack this particular problem, not only by extending education among children more widely, but also by educating their parents: and adult education is, indeed, an urgent necessity. It will be considered in a later chapter, but is mentioned here since the problem of providing it throws additional strain on the colonial educational systems at a time when they are little able to bear it.

The size of the task and the unfavourable nature of the environment are not, however, the chief difficulties. They can be overcome by suitable planning and organization if the necessary teachers and finance are available. The crux of the problem is that the supply of teachers, both in num-

bers and quality, is greatly below the need even for the education of the children now attending school. It may be a truism to say that children cannot be taught without teachers, and that they cannot be well taught without well-qualified teachers, but no easy optimism or wishful thinking can overcome the uncomfortable facts of the situation. The qualification accepted as desirable for elementary school teachers in Britain is the Higher School Certificate<sup>1</sup> followed by two years' professional training. Makerere College is the only educational institution in East Africa which gives education at this level, and the first batch of teachers, numbering about twenty, who will hold approximately this qualification has not yet (1946) left the college. They will go out to serve territories with populations totalling over 14,000,000. They will, of course, as less well qualified teachers have done in the past, join the staffs of secondary schools, and many of them are likely to be given the responsibility of teaching in senior secondary classes. Teaching standards must be put far lower than those accepted in Britain in order to get moving at all.

If we put the minimum qualification for the primary school teacher as the completion of the full primary course plus, say, two or three years' professional training, the prospects of increasing the supply of teachers are slightly less black, though still for the immediate future very gloomy. Uganda, educationally the most advanced of the East African territories, had under 3,000 pupils in Standard VI in 1943, and Nyasaland only 178, of whom only 42 reached a satisfactory standard in the government examinations. In 1941 in Northern Nigeria, with a population of about 10,000,000, only 31 out of 172 candidates reached the full standard (second year secondary) for entrance into Northern Nigeria's one full secondary school, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Usually taken at school two years after passing School Certificate or a university matriculation examination.

same year the output of teachers with full primary academic qualifications from the one government elementary training centre was about 20.

Thus there is no room for easy optimism about the scale on which progress will be possible in the immediate future if any sort of worthwhile teaching standards are to be observed. The prospect is even less cheerful when it is realized that the very limited primary school output is not by any means all available for training in teaching. While education is so limited, and the field of possible employment rapidly expanding, education has a scarcity value hardly understandable by those who have never lived in tropical Africa. Men who can speak English have a wide choice of jobs. They are in demand as clerks by commercial firms and government departments, and large numbers, far greater than the schools can possibly supply, are badly wanted for training in the medical, agricultural, veterinary, survey, and other departments of the central and local governments. General social and economic development, now to be speeded up by the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, steadily increases the already large demand, and to most people the prospects of work outside the teaching profession are more attractive than those which obtain inside it. Indeed, in the past many of the teachers already trained have left teaching for other work, and there is no sign yet of any change in this tendency. And so the teaching profession, the expansion of which is essential to all future development, is not only starved at the source of recruitment, but also suffers further heavy losses from among those already in it. Unfortunately a large proportion of such losses occur among the best qualified and most intelligent of the teachers.

It is therefore important to understand why teaching is relatively less popular than other work, for it is on the basis of such understanding that remedies must be sought.

One reason certainly is that the pay and prospects of teachers are usually less attractive than men with the same academic qualifications can find in other work. This has been partly due to the relative poverty of the missions, who could ill afford to offer the salaries normally paid by government departments and commercial firms: for a knowledge of English still has a scarcity value which tends to raise salaries above the normal economic level, and out of all proportion to the wages paid to skilled craftsmen. This particularly applies to clerks, whose average salaries are comparable with those paid in Britain to persons with much higher qualifications and a much greater daily output of work.<sup>1</sup> This will doubtless right itself in time, when a larger proportion of the population has become literate in English, but meanwhile recruitment for the teaching profession is seriously affected.

A second reason, less general but nevertheless important, is that many men are unwilling to submit to mission discipline. They find residence on a mission station distasteful, and they dislike what is often in effect close European supervision outside the classroom. Sometimes, too, there have been instances of missions attempting to criticize or forbid political or social activities in which their teachers have engaged. The more independent of the teachers resent this, and prefer a post which will leave them free to live their own lives after working hours.

The scales are still further weighted against the recruitment of teachers where government departments have prepared attractive recruitment-cum-training schemes which offer the primary or junior secondary schoolboy free training plus cash allowances during the training period. The strength of this temptation to a prospective teacher faced with the alternative of paying fees for a longer time at school needs no stressing, especially as at the end

<sup>1</sup> See Cmd. 6277, *Labour Conditions in West Africa*, H.M.S.O., 1941, p. 51.

of it he may have salary prospects little or no better than those offered under a training scheme with pay.

A final reason is that while lip service is paid to the importance of education, in practice the profession of teaching often has less prestige than employment in many other kinds of work, and only in rare instances is this influence countered by any feeling of vocation. Prestige is probably lacking because many of the most intelligent men prefer other jobs for the reasons given above, and teaching sometimes, as in England, becomes a *pis-aller* for the less well qualified.

The most obvious means of increasing the popularity of teaching would therefore be to ensure that teachers should have prospects of pay and promotion at least equal to what they could expect on entering other kinds of employment. Also, to meet the dislike of some potential teachers to service under missions it would seem desirable to increase the number of schools directly managed by the local or central governments. A further most necessary step is to secure more general recognition for the teaching profession as the most valuable for the advancement of their race that well-educated and well-qualified men and women can enter.

It might be argued at this point that if too few of the educated classes are willing or able to undertake the task of educating their fellow men, the difficulty might be partly overcome by recruiting more British teachers for work in Africa. More British staff will, in fact, be necessary, but they can only be economically used for work for which there are not yet enough fully qualified Africans, and which directly aims at increasing the production of African teachers or the efficiency of those teachers already trained. This limits their use to places of higher education, to teacher-training centres, to some key positions in secondary schools, and to the inspectorate; and even there the aim must be to replace them by Africans as the latter become



qualified, for European staff in the tropics is fantastically expensive and costs must be kept down.<sup>1</sup>

Can, therefore, the difficulty be got over by increasing the teachers' pay so that work of other kinds ceases to be more attractive financially? It must be noted that government revenues from taxation are so small, and potential demands for expenditure for government services of many kinds so great, that to give increased salaries except to the worst-paid of the teachers would almost certainly mean that their number would have to be reduced, and the urgently required increase would have to be delayed indefinitely. The present economic situation calls rather for a reduction in the relatively high pay of the not very efficient clerical staffs than for increases in the general level of the salaries of the better-paid teachers. Increases should follow, not come before, a rise in government income and the increased output of wealth which more widespread education should make possible. It is certain that no colonial government in tropical Africa has any hope at present of financing efficient universal primary education even at existing rates of pay; and it is equally certain that tropical Africa cannot expect outside help on a scale large enough to meet the cost of paying higher salaries to hundreds of thousands of primary and secondary teachers.

The people must therefore meet the bulk of the teaching costs themselves. The rate of educational development in tropical Africa in the immediate future thus depends to a large extent on Africans; on the sacrifices which the taxpayer is willing to accept as the price of progress; and on the willingness of a larger proportion than hitherto of those who have received higher, secondary, or even primary education—in nearly all cases at the expense of the African taxpayer, the bulk of whom are illiterate—to repay their debt by undertaking educational work at rates their countries can afford. Unless educated men are

<sup>1</sup> See p. 99.

prepared to accept this obligation, responsibility for delays in African progress must partly rest on them. In the end, it is the people themselves who will shape their own future by the way in which they respond to the present opportunity and the present need.

## CHAPTER V

### EDUCATION: PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT (I)

THE last chapter gave a brief survey of some of the chief factors in the present situation. The development aim is clear. Government revenues are obtained by the taxation of the people generally and should be used for the general benefit. As far as education is concerned that means that some degree of efficient education must be aimed at for every child, and that planning should be directed to overcoming those obstacles which prevent its immediate achievement. These obstacles, as we have seen, are the grave shortage of qualified teachers; the fact that at present many too few children continue long enough with their education to enable them to qualify for teacher-training, so that the teaching profession is starved of suitable recruits; the aggravation of the resulting shortage of teachers owing to the relative unpopularity of teaching compared with other work demanding equal academic qualifications; and, finally, the fact that government funds available for educational development everywhere fall far short of the need. Here the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts can help but, in view of the vast development which is desired, only to a limited degree.

The responsibility for using the available funds to the best advantage lies with the colonial governments, and plans for educational development have reached an advanced stage in every territory. Everywhere the stress is laid on providing more facilities for teacher-training.

There must be more teachers, and they must be better qualified and more efficient than at present. Thus money will be spent on building and equipping new training centres, and on the salaries of larger training staffs. In many cases, until more Africans have gained the necessary qualifications and experience, it will be necessary to recruit a certain number of qualified Europeans to assist with this work.

Such action, however, though most necessary, does not solve the whole problem. The new training centres, and the old, require a constant intake of suitably qualified students who desire to become teachers. At present their number is small and their standard of attainment far too low. This cannot be remedied unless in the first place more children can somehow be encouraged to stay at school long enough to give them the academic qualification for entry into training centres. It is thus far more immediately important to increase the number of pupils completing at least their sixth year of education than to increase yet further the number of children attending at the lowest standards. Even if a half of those now entering school were efficiently taught for six years, and as little as a tenth of that half for a further six, the problem of making rapid progress with educational development would be much nearer solution. It is, therefore, important to remove the causes which limit schooling for most children to only two or three years.

The most powerful causes are undoubtedly economic. Education in most parts of tropical Africa is not free, and the fees which have to be paid increase as the child moves up the school. The parents of most children find it impossible to continue over a period of many years with the payment of fees on an increasing scale, especially if four or five children have to be provided for. Too often, the result is that the child has to leave with an education incomplete even by the lowest of any possible standards, discontented

with the village life of the illiterate peasant, and unqualified to do any job—even farming—well.

In view of its evil effect why then does the fee system persist? One common argument in its favour is that Africans will only appreciate the value of education if they have to pay for it. This may have been true in some areas once, but I do not believe that it is true any longer. The advantage of school education to the child and, if continued long enough to qualify him to take a salaried post, to the parent, is now well understood almost everywhere. There are many instances in widely separated parts of Africa of the people being willing to raise local rates to increase educational facilities for their children.

A stronger reason for the fee system is the shortage of government funds and the fact that, though the fees do not pay nearly the whole cost of education in government-aided schools, yet they do help with part of it; and, of course, the greater part of all children attending school attend unaided, poverty-stricken schools entirely dependent upon fees. These children are usually taught by ill-qualified and ill-paid teachers who lack even the minimum of desirable teaching equipment. For government to accept financial responsibility for these schools would throw an enormous additional strain on any colony's finances.

It is also possible to argue that the fee system should be retained on the ground that, since only a part of the children of school age can at present be educated, it is right that the parents of the fortunate ones should at least contribute part of the cost of a privilege which is necessarily denied to many others. If this argument is carried to its logical conclusion it would mean that until the State could provide education for all, each according to his ability, it would provide it for none, and that the whole cost of education, at the higher levels at any rate, should fall on the parent. This is obviously unsound, for it assumes that the whole benefit of the education is to the child, whereas

in practice more education for more children is most desirable in the interests of general progress. It is most important, with only limited numbers now being educated, that those children best fitted to stay longest at school should be enabled to do so. It is quite certain that the need to pay fees, even in government and government-aided schools, prevents this in the case of many children of poor parents.

The answer would therefore appear to be, if lack of funds makes the complete abolition of fees impracticable, a very much more generous provision of free places for the children of poor parents in schools of all kinds after the third or fourth year of school life. Any general lowering of the scale of fees does not answer this particular problem, for even if fees are lowered they may still remain far beyond the means of the majority of African parents. This particularly applies, of course, to the higher fees charged for secondary education. Thus the recent action of a well-known Uganda secondary school in lowering its fees from £21 to £15 in the case of boys, and from £18 10s. to £14 10s. a year for girls in the three top secondary forms, eases the situation for richer parents while still leaving fees at too high a level for more than nine out of every ten parents in Uganda.

But the payment of fees is not the only way in which the economic factor limits the length of school life. Many children do not enter school until they are ten or eleven or even older, and it is therefore only a few years before they are old enough for work. When this time comes the poorer parent has the chance of turning his child from a liability into an asset by removing him from school and using his labour to swell the family income. Where this chance is taken, as it very commonly is, it can best be countered by encouraging parents to send their children to school at a younger age.<sup>1</sup> And this, of course, is highly desirable

<sup>1</sup> This might be done in several ways: by a differentiation of fees

on other grounds, for unless a child enters school young he has little chance, even if he has the ability, of going on to places of secondary or higher education.

If the more generous provision of free places, together with a lowering of the age of entry, did have the effect which might be expected, of encouraging more parents to keep their children longer at school, one immediate good result would be the more economical use of teachers. With teachers in short supply and educational facilities at present so very restricted, it is obviously desirable that every teacher, and especially the better qualified teachers in the higher classes, should be fully used. In fact, however, while the lowest classes in the primary schools are full, and sometimes badly overcrowded, in the higher classes, especially of the secondary schools, the numbers drop, and it is not uncommon for some of the best qualified teachers in these classes to be teaching only ten pupils.

Action to get children to stay longer at school does not solve the whole problem. For example, irregular attendance of children is common in most day schools, and in many territories attendances average only 70 per cent. While this continues schools cannot work efficiently. It is often due more to the attitude of the parents than to deliberate truancy on the part of the children. The illiterate parent in particular may have little or no idea of what goes on inside the classroom, and of how each day's lessons need for their proper understanding the groundwork of knowledge already provided by previous work. Thus children may be kept from school to help on the farm, to be taken on a visit to see relations, or for some other purpose, without the parent ever realizing the effect of casual absence on his child's progress. A very great deal can be done to solve this problem if there is close contact between

according to age, or by making government grants to aided schools dependent on the enforcement of an age limit for entry into the lowest class.

teachers and parents, and more especially by the formation of parents' committees in which this and similar problems can be discussed.<sup>1</sup>

There are other factors also. The physical presence of the child in the classroom does not necessarily mean that he is obtaining the full value of his attendance. This depends among other things on his state of health, whether he is tired or fresh, whether he has eaten or not on that particular day, and, of course on the ability of his teacher and the availability of essential teaching equipment. In all these respects many children are seriously handicapped. The standard of health of the children in the day schools is low, and infection with parasitic worms is particularly high.<sup>2</sup> Equally serious, however, is the fact that very many children attend schools from homes over five miles away. Such children may not have eaten since the previous evening meal and yet may bring no food with them. To tiredness is thus added hunger, and proper concentration on classwork becomes impossible, especially towards the end of the school day.

While schools are few it is inevitable that some children will have to walk long distances. This particularly applies to children attending those schools, the minority, which include senior primary and post-primary classes. Any quick solution of the problem is made more difficult where there is competition between rival missions, for it has often happened that the establishment of a school by one mission to serve a particular area has soon been followed by the establishment of another, belonging to a different mission,

<sup>1</sup> I have personally found such committees of the greatest value in educationally backward areas in Northern Nigeria. The committees were given considerable control over the fixing of dates for holidays, over matters of discipline, and over the arrangement of their school's non-academic activities. Over a period of three years average attendances rose from under 70 per cent to over 85 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> This is primarily a health problem and has already been mentioned in Chapter III, pp. 13-14.



which is anxious to prevent its adherents from coming under educational and religious influences other than its own. It is impossible not to understand and even to sympathize with this attitude, but it does mean nevertheless that the proper planning and siting of very limited school facilities is made impossible: and that two or more schools may be sited to serve one area while others are completely neglected.<sup>1</sup>

With this problem insoluble for the present it becomes even more important to solve the problem associated with it—that of hunger—and this can only satisfactorily be done by providing school meals. Some little progress has already been made with this in a few territories, e.g. in Zanzibar, Uganda and Nigeria, but nowhere has any really large-scale scheme yet come into operation. Government revenues at their present level, or at any level which can be hoped for for a long time to come, are quite inadequate to meet this need; especially as the demand would be that school meals, for the sake of the children, should include some of the more expensive articles of diet to compensate for the acknowledged lack of sufficient protein and fat in the foods normally consumed.

The most hopeful line of attack, in order to do *something* rather than to wait indefinitely to implement an ideal, would appear to be to encourage the schools themselves to grow more food in school farms and gardens, concentrating on the production of easily grown foods—beans and the like—rather than on gardening of a professed experimental or educational type. The urgent problem is not so much to provide an ideal, balanced, and therefore relatively expensive diet, possible only in a few fortunate and specially favoured schools, but to make sure that in

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty mainly arises between Roman and non-Roman Missions. Protestant Missions generally are willing to co-operate with each other in education and even combine to manage 'Alliance' schools. See also footnote on p. 68.

every school, for every child needing it, there is a minimum of food of some sort that will remove the worst effects of hunger and help children to learn more easily. It cannot be emphasized too often that if universal education is really the aim ideal standards are as yet impracticable. The choice must be made between giving much to the few at the expense of the many, or stretching limited resources as widely as possible and with the utmost economy.

Action on the lines already suggested might well do much to make the work of existing schools more effective through encouraging higher average attendances, preventing wastage in the senior classes, and assisting pupils to learn more rapidly. Action, however, is also badly needed to make more efficient teaching possible. Many teachers are handicapped by inadequate training or through no training at all; and many lack a sufficiently good knowledge of what they are expected to teach. Something can be done to remedy this by giving much greater attention than at present to providing good and frequent refresher courses at the training centres for those already engaged in teaching,<sup>1</sup> and by building up larger staffs of visiting teachers of good quality to demonstrate in the schools themselves up-to-date teaching methods and good classroom practice. The potential effect on teaching standards and efficiency of this policy is out of all proportion to its very moderate cost, and it has the advantage of almost immediate good effect—long before the hoped-for increased output of new teachers from the training centres can be produced.

Such action is all the more necessary in view of the conditions in which many teachers—especially those in village schools—have to work. They are necessarily isolated for long periods among people who are largely illiterate; they have no access to libraries; possess few if any books

<sup>1</sup> Not only to improve teaching methods but in order to broaden the views of the teachers on matters of current interest.

of their own; and lack almost every source of mental stimulus which teachers in educationally more advanced countries enjoy. These conditions, quite as much as lack of adequate professional training in the past, are responsible for much of the bad teaching in many schools and they give rise to a problem quite as important as, and even more urgent than, the supply of new teachers. One chief duty of the training centres must obviously be to train new teachers; but for many years to come they should also accept the not less important duty of assisting and stimulating teachers already trained.<sup>1</sup>

There is one last point before we leave this subject. Teachers, even good teachers, cannot do their most effective work without certain essential equipment. Blackboards can be cheaply made locally from cement or wood and will last for many years, yet even in senior primary and secondary schools classrooms are often provided only with one small board. Suitable text-books are necessary for effective teaching, yet there are many schools where teachers are expected to teach without them, and where no money, even £5 a year, is regularly allocated for the building up of a teachers' reference library. Poverty is often urged as an excuse, but surely it is a false economy to pay teachers and to incur all the other necessary recurrent expenses, and then to fail to provide teachers with the *minimum*, possibly as little as 2 per cent of the total school expenditure, which can greatly help to make their teaching more effective.

No apology should be needed for dealing at some length with the means for making the existing school system more efficient, and thus enabling a much larger proportion of children than at present satisfactorily to complete their educational course. Until that initial problem has been

<sup>1</sup> Several notable and successful experiments have already been made on these lines, e.g. at Bakht-er-Ruda in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and at the Astrida College in the Belgian Congo.

solved there can be no satisfactory basis for development. For the next ten years at least the projected new training centres must depend for their recruitment mainly on the existing schools, and it is of the first importance that they should produce far more pupils suitably qualified for training as teachers. The measures to enable schools to meet this need should take precedence over everything else. Development after all depends on the training centres obtaining sufficient candidates of good quality.

However, there still remains the problem of preventing the ablest of the teachers and too large a proportion of the best of the pupils who have passed through their hands from seeking other employment. The causes of this tendency were discussed in the last chapter. One obvious solution mentioned there is to make the teaching profession less unattractive compared with other types of work. Since the lowest grade of teachers in vernacular schools in the last pre-war year was commonly receiving a salary as low as £6 a year (the unskilled labourer's wage) there is a very strong case for action. Higher grade teachers in government and government-aided schools, however, are paid very much more,<sup>1</sup> but it is still true that commerce and certain departments of the civil service offer the intelligent student more attractive financial prospects than teaching.<sup>2</sup>

It is probably impossible, as it is in every other country, to provide teachers with financial prospects as good as the

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the starting salary in the government service for Makerere-trained teachers of approximately School Certificate standard plus training has been £72 per annum, rising by £6 annual increments to £132. In the relatively poor colonial territories, where the peasant and the labourer have incomes varying from £6 to £10 a year, this scale can hardly be considered low.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the Nyasaland Post-War Development Committee (interim report) found it necessary to recommend that the higher grades of teachers should be paid salaries at least equal to those paid to the higher grades of clerks in the government service. (*The Crown Colonist*, September 1944, p. 661.)

best of them could expect from certain other kinds of work, and at the same time make progress towards universal education. The taxpayers could not meet the cost, especially in Africa where most incomes are so far below the level of the incomes sought by the teachers. But in Britain, and in many other countries, other factors besides money may influence the young man's choice of profession, and among the strongest of these may be a sense of vocation arising from a desire to spend his life in worthwhile work and to leave one small part of the world somewhat better than he found it. The untiring and selfless work of very many missionaries, some of them men of outstanding intelligence and ability, bears witness to the reality of this sense of vocation among some at least of the white people, and it would be insulting to Africans to assume that they will not respond in the same way to a similar ideal. But to obtain the response there must first be clear understanding of the present situation. How can this be done? Only, it would seem, by placing squarely in front of the African peoples, and teachers and students in particular, the problem that confronts them, and the key position which the efficient teacher must take in helping his country's progress. If the statement is sufficiently clear and the economic implications of educational development up to the standards (rightly) demanded by Africans are stressed, it is probable that recruitment might considerably benefit, and considerations other than those of purely material advantage weigh more often in the student's choice. But it also appears that no such action can be fully effective unless teachers are convinced that a full and workable development plan exists, and that their salary levels are not being kept unnecessarily low by uneconomic luxury spending from the public funds on a few privileged schools while others still lack the bare necessities. Education for everyone and equal opportunity for each according to his ability, are ideals which can fire the imagination of

Africans, satisfy their hopes for the real advance of their communities, and thus be thought worthy of some personal effort and sacrifice. But the case must be convincing and supported by observable facts.

The need for economy is clear. Government revenues are small and vary from about 5s. to £1 per head of the population according to the colony. During the next ten years an average of about 4s. per head annually may also be provided from Britain under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. On this slender foundation have to be built up as soon as possible efficient economic, health and educational services for the whole population. Most of the help from Britain will be for necessary capital expenditure, and in education will probably take the form of grants for buildings and for the staffing of training centres. As the output from such centres rises, and new schools are established, recurrent costs for staff and equipment will rise steeply. They will have to be paid for in large measure, if not entirely, by the colonial populations, either directly from the fees paid by parents, or indirectly by the whole population through taxes paid to government. But the annual output of wealth per head in the African colonies is low. The amount, therefore, which can be put aside for education is small, and the salary scales of the teachers must, in the end, conform to the economic situation in the colony. The vastness of the need for more and better education, and the smallness of the resources from which it has to be provided, form the basis of the argument that teachers' salaries cannot be raised beyond certain definite limits without hindering educational development. Such increases must follow, not precede, the increase in the production of wealth that may be expected as the result of better education.

This argument, however, is only valid if the basis on which it rests—the aim of universal education and equal opportunity—is closely adhered to, and if the limited avail-

able funds are allocated on an understandable system of priorities which fit into a general plan of full development. Thus luxury spending on desirable but non-essential things for a few schools, e.g. expensive buildings, carefully levelled playing fields, and unnecessarily high standards of general accommodation and equipment, does not square with the general argument of the need for economy of teachers' salaries, and must raise doubts in the minds in teachers who are asked to scale down their salary demands.<sup>1</sup>

While the number of children receiving secondary education is very small it is, of course, possible to spend relatively large sums on their education out of very limited resources. This is all the more likely to happen because most Europeans in the colonial government services who control colonial expenditure have had the privilege of education of an expensive type which cannot, even in Britain, be made generally available under the State-aided system. They are eager to assist African advancement and argue that only the best is good enough. With this principle every right-thinking person must agree, and disagreement can only arise in the way it should be applied in view of the very limited funds with which it has to be implemented. In fact, ideal standards in non-essentials cannot be widely applied at present, and the choice must lie between luxury standards for the few and nothing, or almost nothing, for the many: or, on the other hand, the strictest economy in spending over and above what is needed to obtain good staff and good *essential* equipment.

Strict economy on this basis, if practised in the existing circumstances, would also have a positive value in bringing home to the fortunate few receiving secondary and

<sup>1</sup> One example which recently came to my notice is worth quoting. In one government-aided secondary school of about 120 pupils I was told that the school had applied for, and confidently expected to get, a grant of £1,000 for the further levelling of the playing fields to bring them up to good match standards, and also a grant of £400 for the installation of a telephone.

higher education, largely at the taxpayers' expense, the fact that their education at a higher level than that of the majority is a privilege made possible for them by the sacrifices of the less fortunate. That realisation might help to remedy the cleavage which education has already begun in African society through the not unnatural pre-occupation of the small educated class with its rights and privileges, to the neglect of the majority whose taxes have done much to educate the chosen few. With the fee system as it stands, which excludes from education at the higher levels many children who could profit by it, very many of the poorest people are subsidizing, through the taxes they pay, the education of the children of the wealthy.

There is one other factor of great importance which may encourage immediate spending on desirable but non-essential improvements at the expense of essentials in a long-term policy of development. Such development must take some time before it can get under way. Until more children stay longer at school it will be impossible to train to a good standard many more teachers than at present: and until these are available it will be impossible to multiply greatly the number of efficient schools. Yet money help under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts is forthcoming at once, small in amount in relation to the ultimate need, but large in view of the small field for its immediate use, and *limited*, as far as is known at present, *to the next ten years*. This brings the danger of spending at a high and even a luxury level on a few immediate objectives during a short period of comparative plenty. This will be followed, unless help from Britain is indefinitely continued, by a period of acute financial stringency and rapidly mounting recurrent costs as the training centres begin to pour out ever-increasing numbers of teachers. Educational development needs planning on a much wider basis than ten years if excessive spending on a piecemeal programme in the existing limited field is to be avoided. There would



therefore seem to be a strong case for funds to be made available for education from the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts in the form of block grants, with no time limit for their spending. This would enable a more realistic policy to be adopted in which expensive buildings up to full Public Works Departments' standards would rank some way below the higher priorities of well-qualified staff, essential equipment, free places, and school meals for the children of poor parents. Buildings are indeed important, but they are only one of many factors, and it is by fitness of design rather than construction from expensive materials that they should be judged.

There must be space; mud and wattle walls and a clean dung floor with room to spare may be a far, far better thing than the concrete classroom, with crowded desks, that is too small because it is expensive; big shady trees with clean grass under them, those are worth a lot. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, perhaps, Africa cannot yet afford to spend money as an easy substitute for thought, effort, and imagination.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Stuart, *African Pattern*, Edinburgh House Press, Livingstone Press, 1945, p 71.

EDUCATION: PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT  
(II)

SO far only those problems have been examined which have to be solved before any really large-scale advance can be made in increasing the number of children in school and in raising the level of the standard of teaching. But as education becomes more efficient and more widespread, it becomes increasingly important to define its purpose and to ensure that it is rightly used. The possibilities of evil in the misuse of an efficient educational system have been only too well illustrated by events in Germany in recent years.

One aim, of course, must be to provide the knowledge which people can use, if they wish, to reach a much higher level of material prosperity. At present most people in the more backward areas are conservative and often suspicious of government policy, and this hinders desirable progress. But Africans are no more innately conservative and suspicious than any other race, and where they have been influenced by education they have been quick to adopt new ideas and new habits. New crops, new farming implements, and new trades and professions have been quickly adopted as soon as they have proved their value. In almost every aspect of life custom has been adapted to meet new needs and new circumstances—as far as these have been understood. The problems and dangers of the present situation in agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and health would seem to be caused less by any innate qualities of conservatism on the part of Africans than to past failings

of the educational system. Education has been on too small a scale, and therefore too ineffective, to meet the greatness of the need and the speed of change during the last sixty years.

By far the greatest contribution that an improved school system can make to the solving of these problems is to spread literacy more widely, both in the vernacular and in English. The power to read the printed word opens the way to further knowledge, not only at school but during the whole of life.

The schools make a second contribution to material progress where they also provide further knowledge as a basis for professional or technical training, on which, equally with wider general knowledge among the African masses, African material progress must depend.

It is with this second function of the schools that African parents and children are chiefly interested, not indeed from their concern with the wider issues of African development, but, quite reasonably, from the narrower standpoint of individual self-interest. Education for professional or technical work brings the chance of a larger income than the peasant farmer or labourer can obtain.

It might be thought that as long as school education was regarded solely as assisting material prosperity there could be little controversy about its content. What should be taught should obviously be decided by African conditions, so that pupils might leave school well equipped to understand both the problems which will face them and the means by which these can be solved. There can in fact be little dispute about strictly professional training which is defined by the nature of the task to be performed, but in so far as the schools attempt to provide a basis of sound general education prior to vocational training there is the most unfortunate difficulty that very few Africans are willing to accept the content of knowledge that would assist them most. This arises in part from the mistakes made in

the early days, when education of European content was uncritically accepted as suitable for African conditions. Schools at the secondary level thus followed English syllabuses and aimed at gaining successes in English examinations. Much of the instruction given was, of course, inapplicable to African conditions,<sup>1</sup> but it had the great advantage from the point of view of the teacher that textbooks were available, and from the point of view of Africans that the few who succeeded in passing English examinations based on English syllabuses had a guarantee that they had satisfied English educational standards. On the other hand, syllabuses specially designed to provide the best possible education for African conditions, and examinations of merely local significance, were not unnaturally suspected of being part of a policy which aimed at keeping the black man down, and reserving to the white man the education which was the key to his superior economic status. Thus we get the extraordinary situation that even the very limited educational facilities now available may, in part, still be devoted to spreading knowledge relevant in England for English conditions, but much less relevant in Africa than other knowledge which is largely or completely neglected in the school curricula. This situation has been partly remedied in recent years by the inclusion in some British examinations of options designed to meet the needs of overseas students. Much, however, remains to be done, and desirable experiment in the formation of suitable syllabuses for secondary and higher education may still be hampered by the foreign examinations which many students wish to take.

The spread of literacy, preparation for training in vocational posts, and the provision of knowledge which will enable children as they grow up to understand a little better the problems they will have to face: these are all necessary and desirable aims for African schools, but there

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 33-4.

is a further aim—the development of character and the teaching of the right use of leisure. It is in this respect that mission schools, in spite of some disadvantages which have already been noticed, claim to be greatly superior to schools directly controlled by governments. Under mission control schools not only give religious teaching, which might also be given at certain hours in government schools, but they also seek to make religion and the Christian way of life the background to all school activities of whatever kind. In so far as they succeed, it is clear that they can co-ordinate all sides of education into a more effective whole than any system of secular education in which religion is emphasized only at fixed times. This view has been accepted by the British government in its plans for educational development in the colonies in all but Moslem areas. It does, however, rest on two assumptions which may not be universally accepted: that teachers in government schools are purely secular in outlook; and that teachers in mission schools are not only religious in the narrow sense of religious observance, but also show in their daily lives constant examples of the application of Christian ethics to the many problems which now confront Africans, individually and in society. The success of missions in achieving their aim must therefore depend on how far they can succeed in recruiting ample staff of the very highest quality, African as well as European: and the fact that teaching under mission control is unpopular with many potential teachers is an indication that the mission aim is not necessarily easy of achievement.<sup>1</sup> The problem is complicated by the fact that Christianity has not come to Africa as one great unified body of belief. It is taught by many different missions and sometimes, unfortunately, the emphasis has

<sup>1</sup> Something like 70 per cent of the students in one of my classes who intend to become teachers, many of them *faute de mieux*, express a very strong preference for work in government rather than mission schools. These students in nearly every case received their own education in schools controlled by missions.

been more on sectarian and denominational differences than on the kernel of the Christian message.<sup>1</sup> Most Africans naturally lack the European historical background to these differences, and may easily be led to attach too much importance to them. It would be unfortunate if the missions, which most people would agree to be ideally a most valuable educational instrument, and which have so far borne almost the whole brunt of the educational work, should by their division be less effective than a government school system in speedily creating a real national community. For education in tropical Africa must add to its other aims, not merely as in Europe the education of national communities already in existence, but their actual creation from a jumble of tribes and clans still widely separated by language, customs and modes of thought. The divisions of the modern churches may to some extent lessen the effectiveness of their educational work in promoting national unity.

It is, however, essential that education should help to mould a purposeful new community at the level of the colony if the ideal of beneficial self-government is to be fulfilled. Britain has the advantage of being a mature society in which children are not entirely dependent on the school for their ideas about the way in which the national community functions, or for their conception of their rights and duties within the structure of society. Yet even so there is an increasing tendency in British schools to include some study of civics in the curriculum. In tropical Africa the need is a hundredfold more urgent, for as yet within each colony there are few common bonds, except the white administration imposed from without, to give to its smaller communities purpose strong enough to enable them to work together effectively for common ends. Educa-

<sup>1</sup> This point is of rapidly diminishing importance. Joint 'Alliance' schools, especially at the secondary level, have been formed to serve the common needs of several different Protestant missions.

tion thus has a great opportunity and a pressing duty to assist at the birth of a real sense of common citizenship. It can do much, almost unconsciously, by spreading literacy and teaching a common language, but more is needed. It is impracticable to teach in schools all that should ideally be taught about citizenship, because the children lack the experience of adult life which is necessary for full understanding. But it is most desirable that some elementary ideas should be taught and a desire aroused for further knowledge.

The great majority of Africans of all ages are profoundly ignorant of the nature and functions of money and of taxation. In many of the more backward areas the people regard the latter as tribute paid to the conqueror, and fail to connect it with the provision of necessary government services. They believe that most of it is shipped overseas to Britain to raise the standard of living of the white people.<sup>1</sup> Ignorance of this kind is easily removed by an elementary course of instruction which is understandable by quite young children. While it remains it can be a source of danger to the well-being of the colony. It allows ill-disposed persons to lead others to believe that all that prevents general prosperity is government refusal to raise wages all round, and that the white administration is draining Africans of their wealth for white advantage. Such beliefs are more uncritically accepted since white people in tropical Africa are obviously enjoying a far higher standard of living than can be hoped for by most Africans at the present time.

It has been necessary for reasons of space to confine discussion to those general factors which influence pros-

<sup>1</sup> Is this really surprising? In earlier days conquest generally meant tribute. Taxation is tribute in the eyes of many illiterate Africans, and the belief more easily persists where only a small part of the population sees anything of the restricted government educational and medical services. Many people pay taxes, small in amount, but heavy in relation to income, but see nothing tangible given in return.

pects of educational development, and to leave out all reference to such particular problems, almost equally important, as secondary and higher education,<sup>1</sup> the place of the vernacular in education, the provision of suitable textbooks, and the teaching of art and music. Even in this brief account, however, it is necessary to mention the special problem of the education of girls. Much lip service has been paid to its importance, but girls still make up barely one-fifth of the total school enrolment in some colonies, and in others far less. In some territories hardly any girls are receiving education except in low-grade vernacular schools.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways the satisfactory education of girls is even more important than that of boys. To a large extent the solution of the problems of agriculture and soil erosion, no less than those of health, depends on the education of women, but even less progress has been made with the education of women than with that of men. On the whole, therefore, the women remain more strongly attached than their menfolk to customs which have little relation to present needs. Also, nursing, teaching, social welfare and other professions which normally depend on women for at least part of their recruitment are starved of suitable candidates for training.

The backwardness of women's education is partly due to the attitude of parents, who value education for their children chiefly as the key to a salaried post which will enable the child to assist his family in later years. While, therefore, it may be considered worthwhile to make sacrifices to maintain a boy at school, few parents are willing to accept

<sup>1</sup> See Cmd. 6647, *Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies*, H.M.S.O., 1945. 2s. This gives a clear and authoritative account of the present situation and proposed development.

<sup>2</sup> Note, however, that in certain pastoral areas, e.g. in Bechuanaland, the number of girls in school exceeds that of boys, since most boys of school age are engaged in herding cattle. Hailey, p. 1255, refers to this point.



similar sacrifices for the sake of girls,<sup>1</sup> most of whom marry young and are unlikely to undertake paid work. Moreover, education is sometimes thought to lessen a girl's chance of marriage, since she may be less willing to cultivate the food crops, and more exacting in her demands for clothes and household amenities. She may also be less submissive and obedient.

Prejudice against the education of girls is slowly dying out, but a further and more serious difficulty remains. Very few girls stay at school long enough to qualify them to enter teacher-training institutions: fewer still long enough to be trained and to teach for more than a very few years before marriage. The shortage of women teachers is therefore acute, even in the primary schools, while at the secondary stage African women teachers are almost non-existent. Many of the girls who now attend school are taught in mixed classes by male teachers.

The satisfactory development of women's education must therefore wait while the attitude of African parents towards it alters, and until the normal age for marriage rises. It is, however, possible to do something to encourage it by weighting the fee system heavily in favour of girls. Already in many colonies the fees payable for girls are fixed at a lower figure than those for boys, and free places are made available more easily. It might also be desirable, in the case of promising senior girls attending day schools, to award scholarships of a value slightly in excess of the school fees in order to encourage poor parents to keep the girls longer at school. Whether this could be considered while the total funds available for education fall so far short of the total need depends, of course, on the importance which is attached to girls' education in relation to other needs. It is also worth noting, in view of the early age of marriage, that it is very important to do everything

<sup>1</sup> This attitude, of course, is still not uncommon among parents in Britain and elsewhere.

possible to lower the age at which girls enter school, so that many more than at present may have time to complete a worthwhile course of education before they marry.

Such measures, however, do not reach to the root of the problem. School education is a long-term investment, and even if it were possible to make it universal and compulsory as it is in Britain, it could not by itself make the full contribution that education must bring to African development. Many of the social and economic problems, which it is urgent that the people should understand, cannot effectively be taught at school to immature minds which have no experience of adult life. Moreover, even that part of modern knowledge which can be taught at school can, while it is restricted to the young, have little immediate practical effect among the mass of the people. Public opinion in tropical Africa is influenced by children probably even less than in more advanced countries, and if education is to have at once its full potential effect it has to reach the many adult Africans who have never been to school, whose minds are still largely bounded by the narrow limits of tribal education, and who, by reason of their illiteracy, have little chance of understanding those influences from the outside world which are now so greatly affecting their lives.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SILENT MILLIONS

FROM whichever angle we view the factors which at present hinder African progress—the misuse of land, the inefficiency of labour, the poor organization of production and marketing, the prevalence of disease, the lack of education, or the difficulty of promoting sound political development—we are brought back in the end to two root causes: the poverty of most of rural Africa and the lack of adequate education. While the majority of Africans remain uneducated or badly educated no quick and lasting progress can be made.

While this situation continues, sound political development is also made difficult. The views which are expressed by Africa's vocal minorities—African no less than European or Asian—do not necessarily represent the interests of more than the small minority which voices them. The interests of the 'silent millions', the backward and the illiterate, may still depend for some time to come on the existence of an impartial white administration which may be subject to attack and misrepresentation by minority interests when it performs its duty of safeguarding the interests of the people of the more backward rural areas. It is generally agreed that African progress must include progress towards self-government. It is most highly desirable that a grant of self-government should mean the handing over of authority to all the people and not merely to one or more minorities with special interests. This ideal, however, cannot be attained under present conditions, and the satisfactory education of African rural communities—the great majority of all African peoples—is therefore

essential for political no less than for economic and social reasons.

The extension of school education can provide no complete answer. The problems which have been discussed in the last three chapters are sufficiently grave to convince most people that any comprehensive plan for providing efficient school education for every child must take many years to carry out. Thus in Uganda, where the Education Department drew up a detailed development plan, it was not expected that every child would have a minimum of six years' education until 1994.<sup>1</sup> Even so, many people felt that the scheme was too optimistic, that it would be too heavy a drain on the colony's resources, and that there would be great difficulty in recruiting each year the full number of teachers required. We are also faced with the problem that even when school education is both universal and efficient it cannot satisfy all educational needs, because its curriculum must be limited by the immaturity of the pupils and their lack of experience of the problems of living in adult society.

Yet the rapid spread of education in its widest and best sense is of vital importance. The opening-up of tropical Africa has caused numerous economic changes which are quickly altering the conditions under which men live. The final result of these changes may be good if people can understand and control them, and if they can adapt themselves and their societies to the altered conditions. Failing this the evils already caused—soil erosion, sinking water supplies, the spread of disease through the freer movement of people and stock, and the decline of rural life—may become much more serious even than they are to-day, with the result that the people may find it impossible to maintain even their present standard of living. The answer must be found by seeking more actively than in the past the

<sup>1</sup> *Outline Scheme of Development for African Education, 1944-1954*, Table XI, p. 11. Uganda.

full co-operation of African communities in solving African problems. Such co-operation can only be the result of education. There is no time to wait for the necessarily gradual development of school education; nor, as we have seen, can this by itself provide any complete solution of the problem. Full success can only follow large-scale efforts to educate the adult population in such a way that they may become able and willing to help themselves.

The report on *Mass Education in Colonial Society* states the situation very clearly. It argues that social adjustment always lags behind the much swifter pace of economic change, and that the 'lag is sometimes accompanied by the danger of social upheaval'.<sup>1</sup> It notes also the present trend among dependent peoples away from passive acceptance of evil conditions towards discontent, together with exaggeration of the 'responsibility of groups and individuals, especially those in authority',<sup>1</sup> who they feel have it in their power to change things for the better. Economic change has been particularly swift in tropical Africa during the past fifty years, and social adaptation has lagged far behind. Much time has already been lost, changes are still rapidly taking place, and the need for action is therefore extremely urgent.

To this problem there can be only one satisfactory answer—the education of whole African communities, from which may arise the driving force to hasten social change made necessary by changed economic circumstance. It must provide knowledge from which may grow understanding of present conditions, and an ideal towards which those conditions can be changed. It must enable the peasants to realize that they need not remain at the mercy of external and uncontrollable forces; but that by action based on sound knowledge they can themselves remould their way of life to their lasting benefit. It should

<sup>1</sup> Col. No. 186, *Mass Education in African Society*, H.M.S.O., 1943, p. 7.

be noted, too, that it is by just such action based on common purpose that colonial peoples can best train and fit themselves to assume the responsibilities of self-government.

The problem of finding ways and means of educating vast numbers of adults to respond effectively to a rapidly changing economic social and political environment is the subject of the report on Mass Education in African Society.<sup>1</sup> Its authors recognize the difficulty of the task, but they stress its urgency and they suggest ways in which they think quick progress can best be made.

They define mass education as

... all kinds of activities which promote the progress of the common people . . . not only improvement in health and agriculture and rural economics, but the building up of strong units of local government, sound family and social life, and those recreational and leisure-time activities without which no people can long survive.<sup>2</sup>

They envisage this programme being carried out mainly by voluntary workers and agencies, among whom they list teachers' associations and parent-teacher associations, co-operative societies and trade unions, industrial and commercial concerns, Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations, the British Red Cross, and 4-H clubs. They also emphasize the importance of the missions and the churches which are already powerful forces in promoting community welfare. Further valuable aid could be given by smaller unofficial bodies, and in particular by indigenous voluntary progress and improvement associations, clubs and literary societies, 'which have been founded by the initiative of local private individuals who are capable of viewing their community in a more or less critical and objective fashion'.

The voluntary efforts of these agencies would need assisting and supplementing by a central government

<sup>1</sup> Col. No. 186. H.M.S.O., 1943. 1s.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

organization to provide expert technical assistance along certain lines, notably in the preparation of literacy campaigns and suitable broadcasting and cinema programmes. These are examined in the light of experience of what has already been attempted, both in Africa and in other countries, and the Report insists strongly on the need for further research and experiment to improve and adapt existing techniques.

The authors of the Report give most space to the teaching of literacy 'to all adults under (?) fifty years of age'. This they put in the forefront of the mass education programme.

States like China and Russia with great numbers of illiterate peasants have found that it was essential to teach adults as well as children if progress in backward areas was to be accelerated. The education of adults has also been proved to expedite universal schooling, for the literate adult expects his children to attend school, and demands that schools be provided.<sup>1</sup>

Much space is also given to broadcasting and the cinema, and their use in mass education schemes is described. It is emphasized that broadcasting and cinema programmes may have little value unless they are prepared by men and women who have a first-hand knowledge of the people for whom the programmes are intended, so that they can avoid the mistakes due to ignorance of the audience's sense of humour, moral standards and religious beliefs. Those who prepare the programmes must have

... a general education much in advance of that of the average of the audience to be addressed; a bent for educational work and a clear comprehension of the methods and purposes of mass education; the knowledge of their history, customs, folklore, music and dancing and of the mental attitudes of the audience which only a common kinship can bestow; ability to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

use the mother tongue accurately and with all the flexibility and the wealth of idiom it may possess.<sup>1</sup>

So much for the main techniques to be employed, but the authors of the report admit that it may be impossible to apply them everywhere at once, both because the area to be covered is so vast and because in many places there exists

. . . apathy originating in such conditions of life as continuous sub-health or the degeneration of family life, in others hostility or suspicion among a self-sufficient people attached to a narrow traditional way of life and again, in others, the ambition of a class for their own personal advancement and the absence of any operative sense of responsibility for the improvement of the general welfare—these may all hinder the starting of such work.<sup>2</sup>

They therefore recommend that mass education should be tried out initially in those areas which offer good hope of early and substantial success.

They further recommend that in each area selected for immediate work a five-year plan should be prepared which would concentrate effort on one or two main problems. They give as examples: ignorance of a particular agricultural technique or system; the decay of local crafts and industries; prodigal waste of forest resources; sub-health due to disease or malnutrition; a high infantile mortality rate; juvenile delinquency; ignorance of the use and value of money. The problems selected would give a purpose to the teaching of the three R's and of all the other subjects chosen for the mass education curriculum. They would provide 'purposeful community targets to be achieved within a given time'.

Mass education officers would have to be appointed to organize local headquarters in each case, to initiate propaganda, to draw up local targets, to co-ordinate official and

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 21



voluntary action, to arrange for any desirable training for personnel, and to modify plans and targets in the light of the success or failure of what was attempted.

In East Africa at any rate the publication of this Report caused disappointment. It was felt that it admirably stated the case for mass education, and that it had collected into a small space a useful summary of adult education techniques—most of which were indeed already being experimented with in one part or another of tropical Africa. But it failed to indicate either to governments or to interested voluntary agencies practicable means within their financial resources by which any large-scale attempt to educate adult communities could be made. It showed, it is true, how it might be possible to educate a few specially favoured communities during the next ten years, but that is not mass education in the sense that it is needed in tropical Africa. And to the areas most in need of education, and which are therefore most difficult to educate, the Report has nothing immediately to offer but delay.

Nevertheless, some colonial governments have set to work to draw up schemes to implement as much as possible of the recommendations of the Report, although to a degree which is admittedly far short of the ideal. The Uganda plan<sup>1</sup> recognizes that the initial steps must be taken by government, but aims from the start at encouraging local initiative and effort. It sees the necessity for a hall or room in every rural district to serve as a focus for mass education work. Most listeners cannot afford a wireless receiving set. They need a convenient common meeting place where they can listen together, and where groups of listeners can discuss educational broadcasts. Such a place is equally necessary for the showing of films as suitable

<sup>1</sup> Five-Year Plan for Social Welfare in Rural Areas, Uganda, 1945. Since this book went to press this plan has been slightly modified on lines suggested by Dr. E. B. Worthington's Development Report, 1947.

material becomes available, for the teaching of literacy, for the discussion of common interests and problems, and, in fact, for all kinds of social intercourse.

The need is not so much for a few well-built and expensively equipped halls in the larger centres of population as for many smaller buildings, one in each of the smallest geographical and social units that can be used. In Uganda it has been proposed to encourage local communities to erect such halls with locally provided money and manual help; the government limiting its aid to the grant of funds for furniture and equipment.

Thereafter it is suggested that each community shall maintain its own, though it would be helped in many other ways, e.g. the provision of books and lectures, by the central government and by the larger centres proposed for the district headquarters.

The Kenya proposals would appear to be rather more limited in scope. They envisage the training of some forty ex-askaris with army educational and welfare experience for appointment to the larger population centres, where they will work as government officers in connexion with Information Rooms which it is proposed to establish, and would seem to cater more for the welfare needs of the advanced communities than for the general betterment through education of the masses in the rural areas.

Can these schemes, or any others based on the assumptions of the report on Mass Education in African Society, give any real hope that the education of African communities can be attempted on a scale large enough to break the present vicious circle of rural poverty and illiteracy during the next ten years? The Uganda scheme makes a brave attempt to do so,<sup>1</sup> and it is difficult to see what more could be done in using very limited resources well without introducing some degree of compulsion.

<sup>1</sup> It aims at equipping no fewer than 550 halls in rural areas during the next five years, as well as a number of larger and more expensive

Doubts must arise under two heads: the quality of the educational facilities that government will be able to provide out of its very limited funds, and the degree of co-operation that can be expected from the people. It is unlikely that government will be able to maintain out of its revenues sufficiently large staffs for research and administration of complicated and difficult literacy, broadcasting and cinema techniques to cover efficiently more than a small part of its territory. And what of the people? However attractively presented, mass education does call for real and sustained effort on the part of those for whom it is intended. It may mean, for instance, regularly leaving home for the community centre at night, and walking for several miles along bush paths to listen to the wireless and take part in talks, discussions, and social activities.<sup>1</sup> And learning to read, however easy the lessons, also calls for continuous effort on the part of teacher and learner alike.

There is a further point. Even if we assume the willingness of the educated minority of Africans to undertake heavy voluntary work in support of mass education schemes, are they available where they are most needed? It is generally agreed that the crux of the problem lies in the rural areas, but the number of educated Africans in such areas is very small. Most of them live in or near the larger centres of population, and in general it is true to say that the most backward areas have the least number of educated men to assist them. Even those who are avail-

centres at district headquarters. If the plan goes through successfully, and assuming that each hall will serve not less than a thousand people, mass education in some form or another will have been made available to some 600,000 people—about 15 per cent of the total population.

<sup>1</sup> One of the chief difficulties which may hinder the successful introduction of the Uganda plan (see pp. 79-80 above) is that the people of Uganda do not live in villages. Each family lives on the land it cultivates, and wherever the 'village' hall may be placed, it will be too distant to be visited frequently by more than a very small proportion of the people it is designed to serve.

able are at a great disadvantage if they attempt work of this sort. They are usually in government or teaching posts, often strangers in their districts, and liable to be transferred elsewhere before they have gained the confidence of the people. They can do useful work as helpers, but they could normally do very little to get things going in any backward and conservative community.

Under these circumstances what should be done? With revenues too small to meet much more than the existing commitments of governments, and with many departments seeking more staff and equipment in order to extend agricultural, veterinary, medical, educational and other projects, mass education—a new and untried venture—has little chance of obtaining adequate funds unless it is considered important enough to be given priority over all other developments. The case for such priority may well seem overwhelming. Success in educating rural communities would repay its cost by making the work of all government departments easier and more effective. By assisting the people to become more efficient and enlightened producers it would raise the standard of living and, in the long run, increase government revenues by making possible higher taxation with less hardship than at present. Successful mass education would soon repay its cost. This issue does not yet seem to have been faced, largely, perhaps, because the possibility of success is doubted. The education of African communities is a project in which confidence is lacking, and it is left in the unfortunate position of being largely dependent for its finance on what can be spared after the claims of established activities have been met.

There is good reason for lack of confidence, and by no one is this realized more keenly than by those people, African and European, who are most eager for its success. The economic influences of the last fifty years have weakened communal ties, and have encouraged among many

of the people a strong individualism and a materialistic outlook on life. The present demand for education is primarily due to its cash value and to the prestige it gives to the individual. There is little demand for community education of the kind envisaged in the Mass Education report, since it offers little obvious immediate individual gain. Moreover, it demands considerable sacrifice of leisure.

Nor, in East Africa at any rate, is there nearly such a widespread desire among adults to learn to read. Most Africans are no keener than most Europeans on being educated after the day's work is over, and there is in Africa sometimes the further difficulty that illiterates may refuse to be taught except by professional teachers.<sup>1</sup>

While little active co-operation can initially be expected from illiterates, the prospect of help from the educated class is not much more hopeful. Few are interested in personally taking part in the spare-time education of others: still fewer in the mass education programme. Only the best, they say, is good enough for Africa, and the best must conform as closely as possible to accepted British or American practice: and they believe that any system or scheme specially adopted or adapted for use in tropical Africa carries with it a stigma of inferiority. How, then, are the evangelists for mass education to be found? The Report on the Adult Literacy Experiment in Meru, Kenya, states:

Great as is the weight of inertia among illiterates themselves a greater problem . . . is that of arousing the enthusiasm of the educated élite who with few exceptions appear unwilling to co-operate in any movement which aims to enlist voluntary help on any large scale.

Too much weight may easily be given to the success achieved by mass education schemes in Russia, Turkey

<sup>1</sup> E.g. I am told that at Buwalasi in Uganda the Bagishu would not agree to be instructed by amateurs.

and China. Conditions in tropical Africa are much less favourable. In those other countries mass education was only one aspect of a revolution which shook the whole structure of society; there existed an educated class which devoted itself body and soul to the task; the campaigns were assisted by an intense feeling of nationalism and often also by dictatorial power; and, not least important, mass education was focused on compact village units, whereas in many parts of tropical Africa people live scattered over the countryside, and villages, in the ordinary meaning of the word, do not exist. In fact, tropical Africa, although through no fault of its own, lacks most of the conditions which have favoured success in other countries.

Under these circumstances, and especially in the backward rural areas, the recommendations of the Report on Mass Education in Colonial Society are largely impracticable. We have already noted that in such areas voluntary work by educated Africans can, at best, be small in amount because so few of them live away from the larger centres of population. Nor do the main techniques—literacy, the cinema and broadcasting—envisaged in the Report impress those who have first-hand knowledge of backward areas. Such techniques have their chief value where the ground is already prepared, where a fair proportion of the population has at least some education, and where the people are already conscious of a need for betterment. How can consciousness of such a need be produced in those immense areas where it is still almost completely lacking? Some people believe that visits by highly trained and enthusiastic Africans—community educational shock-troops, as it were—who would make close and personal contact with the villagers could initially do far more than images on a screen, voices from a microphone, or the printed word. Moreover, the value of personal contact of this kind has already proved its worth in the Mobile Propaganda Unit which toured East Africa for some years

to stimulate interest in the war effort. The men in this unit were carefully selected and highly trained. Only the very best were employed and they were inspired with enthusiasm for their job. This they interpreted in the widest possible sense. It included not only the giving of demonstrations of army life and skills before large audiences, but also friendly and personal contact with the people of the places visited, whose local activities were thus often given new stimulus. As Captain A. E. Dickson writes in his report<sup>1</sup> of the unit's tour of Nyasaland and Rhodesia:

We have left every village in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia singing our songs and emulating our P.T. . . . If this can be attained in a fleeting half-day's show, what might not be achieved by a properly thought-out campaign in peace-time?

He goes on to urge the peace-time uses of such travelling teams: not only by the demonstration of such vital mass education subjects as soil erosion, malarial control, village hygiene, destocking, reafforestation, co-operation, and so on; but also by bringing into the villages recreation, pageantry and colour, and a glimpse of a fuller and better life. A great deal of the mass education programme could be 'put across' in sketches with a moral, locally written, and all the more effective because of the innate dramatic talent which so many Africans possess.

The recruitment of the best men available from the army and from civil life, trained and inspired with a vision of what their country could become, and sent out in travelling teams, would provide a means of educating backward areas which should on no account be neglected. There can be little doubt that they would be a cheap and very effective instrument in arousing a desire for betterment. It is equally certain that their work would have to be followed up if it were to have any permanent practical effect.

<sup>1</sup> An Experiment in Mass Education. (Unpublished.)

Some considerable help can be expected from missions and from the African and European officers of those government departments concerned with one aspect or another of social or economic development. But where, as in many cases, there is only one qualified doctor, or agricultural, veterinary, or education officer for some hundreds of thousands of people, they can do little to provide practical help in each of many hundreds of villages; especially when they are assisted only by a scanty staff and are fully occupied with specific existing duties.

This brings us to a new point. All the possible lines of action so far discussed in this chapter have rested on the tacit assumption that the education of African communities must be wholly on a voluntary basis, and the same assumption is implicit in the Mass Education Report. Must it really be so? Tropical Africa lacks many of the stimuli which have contributed to the success of mass education in the Soviet Union, China and Turkey. None of the colonies yet exists as a nation and thus cannot possess a long history of past achievement from which can yet spring national pride and incentive to future effort. Could not some degree of compulsion be used at the start to take its place?

The ideal behind British colonial policy is democratic, and we may feel that 'progress' can be too hardly won by compulsion. We may doubt the nature of progress where voluntary effort—itsself the most valuable of all educative factors—is not the sole means of achieving it.

It must be remembered that tropical Africa is facing a crisis which will become increasingly serious as time goes on, unless the weight of poverty can be lifted from many of its villages. Already in many areas there is overcrowding, due not to an abnormally high density of inhabitants to the square mile, but to the little that the existing traditional methods and skills produce from the land to support those who live on it. Resettlement schemes like those of Kenya



and Tanganyika can only ease this problem to a very limited extent: while measures to prevent disease can only intensify it if they assist the population to grow while the mass of the people continues to misuse the land. It is lack of modern knowledge which is the chief cause of poverty, which lowers health standards, which makes universal education for children impossibly expensive, and which denies to Africans quick progress towards the full measure of self-government they should enjoy. The vicious circle of rural poverty, sub-health and illiteracy endangers every scheme for African development and may well be held to justify exceptional measures. In Britain few people would dream of criticizing the compulsory education of their children or compulsory service in time of war. Their value to the community is fully recognized. The need in Africa for the education of African communities is at least as great, and compulsion might be equally well justified if we sincerely believe that it is the only means by which the goal of a new and better Africa can be most quickly reached.

It has been suggested that the problem might be solved by the introduction for young men of a period of compulsory community service for a period of not less than six months, which would need to be timed so as not to interfere with the farming season. During this period of service they would work at urgent projects for the conservation and improvement of the land, such as dam construction, afforestation, contour ridging and pasture improvement, which cannot possibly be financed at present if they have to be done by labour paid from government revenue. Thus

. . . the youth of each tribe would learn, by doing, that the conservation of the land was their own responsibility, and not just the Government's. By bringing together in camps for six months or a year not only the great mass of young men who have had no schooling but the privileged few who have, no greater contribution could be made towards breaking down

the pathetic conceit of many young educated Africans and towards developing a sense of common citizenship.<sup>1</sup>

Camps such as those suggested would also provide most suitable conditions for many other aspects of community education. To labour on communal projects could be added educational courses to promote literacy and to give the young men a background of knowledge against which they could view the problems of their country. The work on which they were engaged would help to drive home precept by practice. The men would then return home with their vision enlarged by contact with other men and with new ideas, and thus provide in every area a more favourable field for further educational activity than could otherwise be hoped for.

It is worth noting also that the measure of compulsion suggested here would not rule out voluntary work. Indeed, it might go far to give it better hope of success. Even within the camps the educated minority would be present and would have a greater opportunity than they could otherwise get to assist in the education of their less fortunate fellow-countrymen.

What are the objections? One, perhaps, is cost, but assuming that mass education is given priority over other schemes this would not be insuperable. Against expenditure can be set the value of the work done to safeguard and increase the productivity of the land. And it is certain that in no other way could education be more cheaply and effectively provided than in such camps, when the only alternative is to multiply small-scale efforts in hundreds of small villages. That, indeed, would still be necessary, but the educational work undertaken in the camps would have given it a good start, making possible much greater results for a given effort.

<sup>1</sup> From an article, 'The Returned Askari', in *The Times*, 21 August 1945.

A second objection may be that people would not accept compulsory service, and that any attempt to enforce it would cause widespread unrest and opposition. If this were really so compulsion would defeat its goal which, after all, is to increase voluntary effort after the men return to the villages. Much would depend on how the scheme was presented. It would have to be fully and carefully explained, and the advice and co-operation of native authorities and the educated minority (if any) sought. The works to be undertaken should be approved, and preferably selected by the people's representatives, and compulsion would only need to be applied to small recalcitrant minorities. These measures, properly and sympathetically carried out, would go far to remove any possible causes of unrest. Moreover, the idea that young men should give compulsory service to the community is not foreign to African thought, although unfortunately the tendency since Partition has been to discourage it, and to substitute money payments for it.

However, it is quite possible that opposition could be expected from young men of the educated class who might resent sharing compulsory service with illiterates.<sup>1</sup> Although their numbers are small they have great influence because of their education, and it is largely with their help that community education must go forward. Their co-operation is essential and it might be obtained by assisting them to understand how their own future prosperity and political future are closely linked with the growth of prosperity in rural areas.

How can this be done? There is the difficulty that even

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that as a result of frequent discussions on the problems presented in this book and in Part I, many of my students have argued justification for a much greater degree of compulsion than has been suggested above. They take the line that until people can be properly educated to understand their problems government is criminally negligent if it fails to protect the people, even in spite of themselves, against the results of their ignorance.

those who are best educated in the school and college sense often lack full and exact knowledge of the problems which confront them. Although there are many books which contain much relevant information their value is limited by the lack of adequate lending-library facilities and by the high cost of books in relation to salaries.<sup>1</sup>

It must obviously be a function of colonial centres of higher education to collect and make available to the public without bias the facts of the African situation.<sup>2</sup> They are peculiarly fitted for this task because of their independent status, and by the facilities for study and research which they can best provide. But while their teaching is restricted to a small number of students who enter direct from the secondary schools they cannot play their full part in forwarding the main aims of mass education. The collection and arrangement of facts is not enough, and the publication of books can only partly meet the need. Thus one chief aim of these institutions might be at the earliest possible moment to provide short resident courses which can be attended by representatives of the educated classes, and in which the African situation can be studied and discussed. Once this development has begun the way lies open for a much wider spread of knowledge through the community by means of discussion groups supported, one hopes, by better lending-library facilities and by correspondence links with the centres of higher education. In this way the necessary basis of fact can be quickly and widely spread, and with more knowledge a sense of urgency,

<sup>1</sup> There is the further disadvantage that a proportion of the available books, especially those dealing with East Africa, are concerned mainly with racial and political questions, so that the even more important basic social and economic problems tend to be viewed from the racial angle, and sometimes more in order to allocate blame for what is wrong than to suggest practicable action which might bring about all-round improvement.

<sup>2</sup> An Institute of Social Research has just been established at Makerere College in East Africa. In West Africa an Institute of Arts, Industries and Social Science was established several years ago.

of 'making up for lost time', may become general in African society. To any one who genuinely desires African advancement to a more prosperous and less dependent status fuller understanding of the problems involved cannot fail to create this sense of urgency, and is it not from just such a feeling that the driving force of the whole mass education programme must come?

There is one last point. If we assume that the education of African communities can be successfully started, will it be possible to maintain enthusiasm indefinitely? To some extent each success may be expected to encourage further effort, but it has to be remembered that education of this sort is a long-term programme, and that as immediate needs are met others will arise. Indeed, some aspects of mass education will still be needed even when the ideal of universal compulsory education for all school children has been reached.<sup>1</sup>

Community education which leads only to social and economic progress will fail to satisfy, for successful development along such lines will create new forces and new desires which will involve also alterations to the *political* structure of society. As, in the widest sense, the people become better educated, they must obtain increasing power to direct their own future.

'If there is to be a planned order including us,' they will say, 'we must be free to play our own part in the shaping of it.'<sup>2</sup>

Community education is essential to provide the knowledge needed to assist the people to control their own future with benefit to themselves. It is no less important that as its object is achieved the people should in fact obtain such control in proportion to their fitness to exercise

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Livingstone has stated the limitations of school and college education, and the need for the general provision of further education to adults very effectively in his book, *The Future in Education*, Cambridge University Press. 3s. 6d.

<sup>2</sup> Col. No. 186, p. 8.

it. It is with the implications of this aspect of development that most of the remaining chapters of this book are concerned.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPENDING POLICIES

SINCE the earliest days of British administration in Africa the colonial governments have suffered from lack of revenue because the countries they ruled were economically backward. From the first, therefore, they encouraged greater production, and tried especially to increase the export trade. This was considered particularly important because the territories largely depended on exports for the overseas credits they needed—for paying interest on borrowed capital, for purchasing equipment, and for paying the non-native staffs in government service. The effort met with considerable success, and as government revenues grew it became possible to provide increasing sums for the improvement of health, education, agriculture, forestry and for similar purposes.

Revenues, however, remained far too small for any really large-scale development which might provide efficient social and economic services for everyone. This was particularly true of education and health. What happened was that a hospital was built in each of the larger towns, and a few dispensaries for the more important outlying population centres. Usually some health work was also undertaken in the same places. In education government established a few primary or secondary schools and teacher-training centres or, more often, made grants in aid of the best of the schools and training centres already established by missions. Even with small revenues, since what was attempted was also on so small a scale, most colonies managed to provide a few hospitals up to a good or even a high standard of staff, buildings and equipment, and to

maintain a few schools reasonably well. But we must remember the limitation. It meant that government served in this way only a small minority of the population, and in practice this meant mainly the educated minority, most of whom lived in or near the chief centres of population. Very little could be spent in providing anything at all for the rural population which lived at a distance from the towns—'the silent millions' referred to in the last chapter.

During recent years, and especially owing to the mental and moral stocktaking encouraged by the Second World War, the whole idea of colonial development has been widened and deepened. The urgency of the problem of helping entire populations to better their economic and social conditions, and to fit themselves for a grant of self-government, has been recognized and put in the forefront of policy. It has also received practical recognition in the grant of £120,000,000 under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945.<sup>1</sup>

Two points about this Act are significant: (i) the size of the grant, though large, is quite insufficient to pay for more than a small fraction of the cost of the desired development: after all, it amounts to no more than a grant, spread over a ten-year period, of £2 per head of the population of the colonial empire; (ii) it has been taken by world opinion, and by colonial opinion, as an earnest of the intention to improve conditions in the colonies for the *whole* of their populations. Thus while more will be expected of colonial administrations than in the past, the resources available to them have been only slightly increased in relation to the greatly enlarged scope of their duties.

The first reaction in tropical Africa to the Colonial Development and Welfare Act was often to overestimate what could be done with the funds it made available.

<sup>1</sup> This takes the place of the Act of 1940 which allocated £55,000,000 for the same purpose.



People thought too much in terms of £120,000,000, which seemed an enormous sum to poverty-stricken colonial treasuries, and too little of the vastness of the numbers who needed help. Often, therefore, planning was along traditional lines and on too generous a scale, when the real need was to rethink colonial spending policies in terms of a difficult, costly and long-range objective which had suddenly become much more urgent. In relation to the goal of all-round betterment, colonial revenues remained pitifully small even after all possible help from Britain had been allowed for.

It is, indeed, abundantly clear that present resources in skill and material fall far short of what is needed to carry any general development programme very far. Even one aspect only of development, e.g. six years' compulsory education for every child, or a reasonably complete medical service for everyone, could easily swallow up the whole of existing government revenues.

It is impracticable and undesirable that Britain should try to bear nearly the whole burden of colonial development: impracticable, because the cost of supplying the first-class economic and social services desired for some 60,000,000 people would be far too great for the smaller population of Great Britain to support; and undesirable because the colonies must become self-supporting if they are ever to enjoy any real measure of self-government. The colonies must therefore somehow bear the main cost of the development programmes, and the £120,000,000 provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act must chiefly be used to assist the colonies to produce the necessary wealth themselves.

Under these circumstances spending in the colonies, whether under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act or from colonial government revenue, cannot be justified merely because educational or medical or housing provision of such and such a type is the best, and therefore

ideally desirable. Each item must be examined against the general economic background of the colony, and its value to economic development weighed against the effect of other possible alternative expenditure. This is especially important where heavy capital spending is proposed for institutions, which will involve the colony thereafter in very heavy annual expense for staff and the purchase of equipment. However desirable such projects may be when they are looked at in isolation, to undertake them at too early a stage of economic development might well throw too heavy a strain on the colony's resources in future years: and if that happened the result would be to delay colonial betterment in its wider and more important aspects.

Once, however, the badly needed initial stimulus has been applied by spending available resources *now* on plans to increase the production of wealth among the mass of the people, and the present vicious circle of rural poverty and sub-health is broken, government revenues will rise, and ideally desirable projects can then be undertaken on a sound economic basis.

If the argument is accepted that available resources are extremely small in relation to urgent needs, and still smaller when compared to the ideal, the case for giving spending priorities only to those schemes which will best assist the colonial peoples themselves to produce greater wealth is overwhelming. What the actual priorities should be—what aspects of education or health, for instance, should be put first, and what priority they should have in relation to spending more directly aimed at promoting economic development—cannot be decided until the situation in each colony has been fully examined, preferably by trained economists. But the case for such examination is strong. Without it no *balanced* programme of material and social development can be prepared. Until such a programme exists there can be no guarantee that essential economic

development may not be starved of sufficient funds because of the claims of other schemes, very desirable in themselves, which ought to be financed from rising government revenues at a later stage, when economic development is more advanced.

The production of such balanced development programmes is, indeed, by far the most immediately important work now being undertaken by the colonial governments in co-operation with the British government. The appointment of Sir Frank Stockdale as Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies in 1940 marked an early realization of the need for the balanced planning of colonial development. His recent appointment at the Colonial Office in London to advise the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the allocation of Colonial Development and Welfare funds marks a further step in the same direction.

The points so far discussed in this chapter are so fundamental to the whole problem of development that it is desirable to restate them briefly. They are:

(i) That the Colonial Development and Welfare Act is based on the idea that colonial policy must aim at helping *all* the people to reach higher standards of living.

(ii) That this aim cannot be achieved without rethinking spending policies which now tend unduly to favour a minority of the people at the expense of the majority.

(iii) That in any case it is not practicable immediately to provide all desirable services for whole colonial populations. Spending must therefore primarily aim at assisting that economic development which alone can make them practicable in the future.

(iv) That action on (i) to (iii) above would bring about quicker economic progress and a greater and speedier rise in government revenue than could otherwise be achieved. It is only when this happens that many admittedly highly desirable projects can be undertaken without sacrificing

the interests of those whose need is greatest at the present time.<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving this subject of spending priorities, it is necessary to refer to one other factor which greatly adds to the difficulties which the colonial governments have to

<sup>1</sup> In an article entitled 'Development or Welfare' the *Economist* of 15 March 1947 discusses colonial spending policies in the light of their ten-year plans. It notes the relatively large sums which are to be spent on health and education, and it doubts whether 'development' will proceed fast enough 'for the colonies to be able to bear their own burden of social services in the foreseeable future'. It suggests that 'the colonies are being encouraged to plan for a higher standard of living long before it is clear whether they will be able to maintain it or not'.

It stresses the need of the colonies for capital far in excess of that which it has so far been possible to make available, and it suggests that the recently published 'Plan for the Mechanized Production of Groundnuts in East and Central Africa' (Cmd. 7030) provides the sort of economic planning which is needed to change the face of the colonial empire. But it emphasizes the very high rate of capital investment necessary and instances the groundnut scheme which requires £25,500,000 for an area of little over 5,000 square miles and for farming operations that will employ only 32,000 Africans. 'What has now to be decided is whether capital, on the scale of the groundnut plan, can ever be got into the colonies primarily for their own sake.'

#### ALLOCATION OF SPENDING UNDER COLONIAL TEN-YEAR PLANS

(Based on figures given in the *Economist*)

	<i>Development</i> £000	<i>Welfare</i> £000
	<i>Agriculture, Forests, Industry, Communications, etc.</i>	<i>Health, Education, etc.</i>
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Nigeria	15,561	26,903
S. Leone	2,039	2,708
Kenya	9,332	6,922
Tanganyika	8,621	8,193
Zanzibar	149	1,169
N.Rhodesia	5,078	3,134

(Expenditure classified by the *Economist* as miscellaneous, and totalling about £9,000,000 for all the colonies listed, has not been included in the above table.)

face. Too few Africans have yet been able to obtain an education which fits them to hold posts in the higher grades of government specialist departments, and although the level of education is rising it is bound to be some time before this lack can be made good.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, these posts have to be filled from abroad, mostly from Britain, and the salaries paid are necessarily based on British standards. These are much higher than the colonial governments can afford to pay for their small revenues if they are to recruit adequate staffs to deal with African problems. But this is not all. Most men, other things being equal, prefer to work in their own country, and to tempt men from Europe it is necessary to pay higher salaries than would be paid for similar work in Britain. This throws on the colonies a heavy burden which, nevertheless, must be borne while enough qualified Africans are lacking; and one justification for heavily increased spending on colonial higher education, is that it should ease this burden. This assumes, however, that educated Africans are willing to accept salaries more nearly related to what their countries can afford to pay. But, though usually educated largely at the taxpayers' expense, it is naturally difficult for them to see the problem in this light. They claim 'equal pay for equal work' and ignore both the special reasons that have enforced the payment of high salaries to men recruited overseas, and the *permanent* bad effect that granting them to Africans now would have on their country's prospects of development.

This problem is exceedingly difficult. It is, however, likely to arise more and more often in the future. It is a conflict between the salary claims of an educated minority, and the essential interests of the non-vocal masses for which the governments are still trustees. The position is all the more delicate because the trustees themselves are usually receiving from the colonial revenues the high

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 6647 discusses this problem in detail.

salaries at which educated Africans not unnaturally aim.

This unfortunate situation may well become one of the chief obstacles to African progress. If the salary claims are met the colonies will be burdened indefinitely with salary costs so high that large-scale progress will be impossible. If they are refused the men on whom the future progress of the colonies must more and more depend may well become discontented and resentful. In either case they become a burden rather than a help to development.

It is possible that the solving of this problem might be made easier if a much greater place were given to the teaching of economics. At present this subject is almost entirely neglected in tropical Africa's schools and colleges. But it is also most desirable to remove the cause. The existence of different scales of pay in colonial estimates for European, Asian and African staffs, even in the case of men doing similar work, is a source of constant irritation to many Africans; and by some it is taken as part of a policy designed to 'keep the black man down'. The fact that good reasons for the difference may exist does not prevent it from being emotionally resented.

This difficulty might be overcome by working out salary scales related to the taxpayers' ability to pay, and applying them to every post regardless of the race of the man who held it. Each post would then be open to the best available man, preference being given to Africans wherever qualifications were equal. These (non-racial) salary scales would be the only charge to colonial government revenue, and these alone would appear in the estimates. Where it was necessary to pay more to obtain men of other races to fill posts for which there were no suitably qualified African applicants, the extra expense might be charged to Colonial Development and Welfare funds. Admittedly, the use of British aid in this way might look at first sight less attractive, and to have less 'advertising value' than capital works in concrete and steel, but the advantages

would be real. The colonies would not lose, for the removal of heavy salary costs from their budgets would release additional colonial funds for development. Colonial planning would for the first time be placed on a sound economic footing. Racial discrimination in the civil service would come to a natural end. The principle of 'equal pay for equal work' could then be applied as far as colonial estimates were concerned. The substitution of Africans for Europeans could be made without friction. And, as more Africans qualified for senior posts and the number of Europeans became less, so the need for grants from Britain would fall and finally cease.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written the Colonial Office has issued Colonial No. 197 on the Organization of the Colonial Service. It adopts the important principle that:

*'The salaries of all posts in the public service of a Colony should be determined according to the nature of the work and the relative responsibilities irrespective of the race or domicile of the individuals occupying the posts.'* Salaries should be fixed at rates suitable to locally recruited staff, and where salaries so fixed are insufficient to attract and retain officers from overseas, overseas allowance should be provided.

## TAXATION POLICIES

**B**EFORE the European occupation there was no regular system of money taxation in tropical Africa, except in the Moslem areas of the Sudan and the eastern coastal strip. Elsewhere, payments were made in kind or in service to the chief, and they were usually limited to what was required for the continuing welfare of the tribe. Thus men could be called on to fight in time of war, or to give their service as messengers in time of peace. Men and women might be required to help in the cultivation of the chief's gardens, and they were expected to send food and beer from time to time for the entertainment of the chief's guests.

The tribespeople normally felt no hardship in carrying out these duties. In claiming them the chief was claiming customary services in the public interest which everyone understood. Nor did they bear more heavily on the people in some years than in others. In time of drought or famine less was expected, and since they were paid in produce or in labour, ability to pay was not affected by the rise or fall of prices which is a chief source of difficulty with the present fixed money tax.

In spite of these advantages the traditional system of payments in kind or in labour could not be continued. The colonial governments needed money to pay their staffs and to buy equipment from overseas, and these could not be paid for in terms of local foodstuffs, beer, and tribal labour service. They therefore introduced a money economy and demanded payment of a money tax. Africans could most easily meet this new demand either by growing



crops for sale, or by working for part of each year for a money wage. With the money thus obtained they could pay their tax and use any surplus to buy goods they could not produce themselves.

There are two chief kinds of taxes—direct and indirect. For the payment of direct taxes the taxpayer is personally responsible. Hut and poll taxes and income tax are examples of taxes of this kind. The most important of the indirect taxes are the import and export duties which governments impose on goods entering or leaving the colony. These are actually paid by the middlemen who import or export the goods, but the *indirect* payer is the producer of the exported goods or the consumer of the imports. This is because the middleman who pays the tax is able to pass it on: to the producer by lowering the price he pays for produce; and to the consumer by increasing the price at which he sells imported goods. It is worth noting that the amount of revenue obtained from both direct and indirect taxation varies with the amount of overseas trade. If fewer goods than usual enter or leave the country, government receives less from import and export duties. If prices are low the farmer gets less for his produce and the wage labourer may fail to find work. If this happens revenue from direct taxation also will probably be affected.

Of the two kinds of taxes the direct form has had by far the greatest effect on African society. It has usually been imposed as a poll tax payable by all males over the age of sixteen or eighteen. In some cases, as in Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika, there has also been a tax on plural wives or, as in Nyasaland, a hut tax payable on any wife in excess of one, and by any unmarried woman who owned a hut. In most parts of East Africa there are both hut and poll taxes, so that anyone not liable for poll tax should be liable for hut tax, and vice versa.

The poll and hut taxes are flat-rate taxes, i.e. they do not take into account differences of wealth, and in the

early days the flat-rate was sometimes the same for the whole colony. It was usually fixed at a sum roughly equal to a month's wages of an unskilled labourer, and this worked out in practice at anything from 4s. to 25s.

The flat-rate money tax of this sort has had important effects. Unlike income tax, which is assessed on money actually received, the poll and hut taxes are based on earning power, and have to be paid by all irrespective of the amount of money each has earned. Their first effect was therefore to force people to work for money, at least for part of each year, either by growing crops for sale or by becoming wage-labourers on mines, plantations, or in the service of government. Wage-earning usually meant leaving home in search of work, but in any case the introduction of a money tax was a first cause of some of to-day's most pressing economic problems. Cash cropping has led to the misuse of land through overcultivation. Wage-earning has had a bad effect, not only on village agriculture, but also on rural social life.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, however, that the money tax has long since ceased to be the only cause of these evils. Except in a few areas the desire to buy imported goods now provides an equally strong reason for earning money.

The flat-rate tax has many disadvantages, but it was the only practicable form of taxation in the early days of British rule. Most colonies were economically undeveloped. There was little or no trade, crafts were few and primitive, nearly all labour was unskilled, and there was no educated professional and commercial middle class. Thus the earning power of individuals varied little, and the chief differences were due more to age and ill health than to education and ability. The flat-rate tax was therefore less unjust than would appear at first sight, and it had the great advantage that it was easy to assess and collect. Government

<sup>1</sup> These topics are discussed at some length in Part I.

## TAXATION POLICIES

staffs were small in relation to the immense areas they administered, and they were usually quite insufficient to attempt detailed assessment of incomes of individuals or even of villages.<sup>1</sup>

One possible disadvantage of the flat-rate tax has long since been removed by laws which free old and sick people from the payment of tax. Students of taxable age are also usually exempted. Other disadvantages remain, and they are often difficult to remove because governments are usually so badly in need of revenue that they hesitate to lower the rate of tax for fear that they may be left with too little to meet their necessary expenses. In times of drought or bad trade, however, something must be done, for then the peasant may be unable to sell enough produce, or the price he gets for it may be too low, for him to pay his full tax without undue hardship. This difficulty has usually been met either by temporarily reducing the rate in the affected areas, or by allowing the tax to be paid in produce, or by labour on roads and other public works.

The manner and time of tax collection matter a great deal. Few peasants have any really safe means of storing money or, equally important, of placing it where they will not be tempted to spend it before the tax payment falls due. Governments therefore try to fix the time of collection to fit in with the marketing season of the chief export crops, when most village people may be expected to have money. But many of the colonies are large and the chief crops ripen at different times of the year. Thus if the tax is collected at the same time throughout the colony hardship may be caused. This is particularly likely to happen if local authorities believe that speed in tax collection will be taken by the central government as a sign of efficient administration. This may cause them to compete with one another to get their tax in quickly, and where this

<sup>1</sup> But see p. 107-8 below for Northern Nigerian practice.

happens the interests of the taxpayers may suffer, especially in outlying districts.<sup>1</sup>

Even if this does not happen, it is still true that the tax, though small in amount, is large in relation to the very limited resources of African peasants and labourers;<sup>2</sup> and in order to avoid the possible hardship caused by demanding the whole sum at once some colonies have introduced the instalment system. Thus in some areas of Tanganyika, and in Kenya since 1936, tax can be paid by stamping cards over a period of time. This system has proved specially helpful to small wage-earners.

The chief disadvantage of the flat-rate tax, however, is that it fails to allow for the inequalities of income which become more and more marked with the spread of education, the learning of new skills, and the development of trade and industry. Thus where soil, climate, and nearness to a railway or seaport have favoured the export of cash crops, whole districts have become wealthy compared with the still backward areas which lack these advantages, and which depend for their money income on the migration of their menfolk to distant centres of employment.<sup>3</sup> This disadvantage has been partly overcome by applying different flat-rates of tax to different parts of a colony, so that where earning opportunities are greater more tax is demanded. Thus in Tanganyika in 1937 the rate of tax

<sup>1</sup> I have seen instances of actual hardship in one part of Africa where speed in tax collection was encouraged. Tax collection was timed to take place after the groundnut harvest and before the cotton season. It was a time of rejoicing for Africans with regular incomes who had money to spare, because the wives of tax defaulters then sold their household treasures at much below market rates. They used the money to pay their husband's tax and thus free him from prison. In this instance, had the tax been collected three months later during the cotton harvest much hardship might have been avoided.

<sup>2</sup> Few of the poorer people, even of Europe, could collect the equivalent of one month's wages for payment in one sum at a given date without some difficulty.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote on p. 125 of Part I for details of local earnings in relation to taxation in parts of Northern Nyasaland.

varied from 4s. in some rural areas to 15s. in others, and from 7s. to 20s. in towns. Most colonies now similarly vary their rates between districts.

This development can only remove injustice between one area and another, but can do nothing to recognize the very great differences which are yearly becoming more marked between individual incomes. Yet the colonies are badly in need of the additional revenue which could be obtained by taxing richer people more heavily. The flat-rate tax must be fixed low in order to avoid inflicting impossible demands on the poor. It follows that it must be unduly favourable to the rich, and a change from the flat-rate system is therefore most desirable, at least in the towns, in the more advanced rural areas, and for the salaried classes. The need of a change of this sort is fully recognized by the colonial governments. Their chief difficulty has been to find a practicable and acceptable alternative.

One possible solution has been provided by the Moslem emirates of Northern Nigeria. Already at the time of the British occupation these had the advantage of a developed economy of agriculture, crafts and trade, a system of taxation based on Muhammadan law, and organized governments which controlled wide areas. These governments were retained by the British as local authorities, and among other duties they were given the task of tax collection. The system adopted was known as the 'lump-sum assessment'. Wherever possible this was based on a report by the District Officer of the cash value of the average annual cultivation and of earnings from livestock, trade and industries. 'Even the assumed income of the drummer, the beggar, or the seller of magic charms enters into this calculation.'<sup>1</sup> The total is regarded as the taxable income of the area, and the annual tax is assessed on it, usually at about 5 per cent of the total. It is left to the village head and his elders to divide out this sum between the family heads of their area,

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 578.

and for these to subdivide it between the members of their families. 'The safeguard for the fairness of the final distribution lies in the public character of the procedure, and in the provision of a power of appeal, which seems to be fully exercised, to the District Officer.'<sup>1</sup> Where detailed assessment by a District Officer has not been possible, the lump sum has been arrived at more simply by calculating from a suitable average sum per head, but even when this is done the advantage remains that the tax paid by each individual differs according to his ability to pay.

The lump-sum assessment system has been widely applied in Northern Nigeria and a similar system has recently been tried in Tanganyika. Its successful working depends on the fairness with which the lump sum is assessed and distributed, and this in turn largely depends on the ability and honesty of native authority officials, and on an effective right of appeal by the taxpayer.

In some parts of tropical Africa the traditional native authorities have too little power and too poor an organization to be entrusted with tax collection, let alone to work the lump-sum assessment system well. Nevertheless, the central governments are still faced with the same problem of obtaining more revenue than the flat-rate tax will provide, without inflicting great hardship on the poor. In Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, for instance, those who remain in the outlying villages can earn very little compared with the earnings of those who migrate to the mines. It was to meet this situation in Northern Rhodesia that Sir Alan Pim in 1938 recommended a lower rate of minimum tax, plus a percentage of wages above a fixed rate.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that the colonial governments have done a good deal to overcome the disadvantages of the flat-rate tax and to adapt it to different levels of wealth

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 578-9.

<sup>2</sup> Report on the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia, Colonial No. 145, 1938, pp. 127-8.

in different areas. Some disadvantages remain, but it is difficult to see how they can be avoided until further economic development makes possible the change over to some form of income tax, or at least to the lump-sum assessment system already tried in Northern Nigeria and Tanganyika.

But while this is generally true, there are already some sections of the people for whom the flat-rate system of taxation is quite unsuitable, and for whom some other more advanced type of direct taxation is desirable. In every territory there are small minorities of Europeans and, in East Africa, of Asians also. Most of them are engaged in the professions, in commerce and industry, or in government service. They usually earn a much higher income than the African peasants and labourers on whose earnings the flat-rate tax is based. Moreover, their incomes are money incomes, and are therefore more easily assessable for income tax than those of peasants who grow their own food, and whose money income represents only a part of the value of their work.

It should also be noted that this class of people whose incomes are measured wholly, or almost wholly, in terms of money no longer consists entirely of non-natives. Many Africans now earn salaries from governments or missions, or from business or industrial firms, while others have set up for themselves in the professions or in trade. Some may still retain rights over land, which their families cultivate for food, but even these depend chiefly on their money income. To such people the arguments for the payment of income tax by non-natives equally apply, especially as their general level of income is far above the average for the peasant incomes on which the flat-rate tax is based.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While the average level of peasant income (assessing all production on a cash basis) may be as low as £4 a year in remote districts, or as high as £25 a year in the cocoa areas of the Gold Coast, the incomes of professional and salaried Africans may range from £40 to £500, and in a few instances to well beyond £1,000. The flat-rate tax is quite unsuitable for the taxation of incomes which vary within so wide a range.

It was to meet this situation that income tax has already been introduced into most colonies,<sup>1</sup> although in East Africa it has so far been applied only to non-natives. There, however high their incomes, Africans are only liable for poll tax at the same rate as the poorest peasant in the districts in which they live.

Both in East and West Africa the introduction of income tax was strongly opposed by the classes to whom it would apply. One of the chief arguments they used was that they already contributed so largely to indirect taxation that the further liability for the payment of income tax was both unnecessary and unfair. The same argument is still used in East Africa by Africans of the higher income groups.

It is a weak argument, for in so far as import duties are charged on luxury goods richer men, equally with the poorer, can avoid taxation by refusing to buy them. If, on the other hand, duties are imposed on necessities such as soap, kerosene, matches, and the cheaper kinds of cloth and hardware, the poor pay as well as the rich.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, some kinds of indirect taxation, especially the export duties on produce, are paid by the peasant producer and not at all by the salaried and professional classes.<sup>3</sup>

The wealthy minorities which opposed income tax were usually able to delay, but not to prevent, its introduction, but their opposition did succeed in keeping the incidence of tax very low. In every colony there are generous personal allowances free of tax in respect of wife and children as well as personal allowances. For example:

Non-native residents in Northern Rhodesia are subject to a poll tax of £1, and income tax is payable by individuals at rates which vary from 6d. to 3s. in the £. Allowances are substantial.

<sup>1</sup> On the Gold Coast as recently as 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Note that one reason for the introduction of direct taxation on the Gold Coast (1944) was to make possible a reduction of those import duties which pressed heavily on the poorer people. E.g. duties on fishhooks, candles, lamps, lanterns and bicycles.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the tax of 5 cents a pound on raw cotton in Uganda.



For instance, a married man pays no tax on an income of less than £720, and is allowed exemption of a further £100 of income in respect of each child or dependant. Out of a total European population of 10,588 in 1936, only 1,124 are at present assessed for income tax.<sup>1</sup>

Allowances in Nyasaland are on an almost equally generous scale. In Nigeria, until recently, the minimum rate was 3d. in the £, and a man with wife and two children resident abroad paid only at the minimum rate on an income of £1,000 a year. In East Africa the rate is higher and starts at 2s., but even so allowances are generous enough to limit the tax liability of a man with wife and two children to about one-tenth of an income of £1,000 a year.<sup>2</sup>

It is hard to see how this situation can be justified. The peasant and the wage-labourer pay a flat-rate tax fixed at from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of their estimated average income. In Britain the principle has long been accepted that the higher income groups should pay in tax a higher *proportion* of income, and that the poorest people should pay very little. Moreover, in Britain, the social services paid for out of taxation are most used by the poor and least used by the rich.<sup>3</sup> In tropical Africa the situation is quite different. The wealthy minorities contribute a smaller proportion of their incomes than the poor and, in relation to their numbers, enjoy a greater share of the benefits provided from taxation. Thus government and government-assisted schools charge fees which are large enough to exclude the poor, and free places are many fewer than in Britain. Similarly, government hospitals and medical

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 5949, Rhodesia-Nyasaland Royal Commission Report, H.M.S.O., 1939, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that a rich East African Native is still more fortunate, for on the same income he would pay only the few shillings of the flat-rate native poll tax.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. State elementary and secondary schools and the national health insurance scheme.

services are more generally available to the higher income groups than to the poor, if only because most government institutions are necessarily centred in the towns, near which most of the wealthier people live.

It would seem therefore that taxation policies should be revised to ensure that the wealthier minorities of all races should in future contribute a fairer proportion of their incomes to colonial budgets. The very heavily taxed people in Britain are voluntarily making sacrifices to assist colonial betterment. Surely the least the colonies can do is to exact from their favoured minorities—African as well as non-native—a proportion of income larger than that paid by the poorest Africans under the flat rate.

## CHAPTER X

### GOVERNMENT: THE PRESENT SITUATION

WHILE development in tropical Africa must largely depend on the wealth that can be applied to solving the problems so far discussed—and hence the importance of the issues raised in the last two chapters—it depends also on the wisdom and efficiency of the colonial governments. These alone have the means to plan and execute much of the necessary work, and to co-ordinate voluntary work in towns and villages.

Therefore the nature of the governments and their fitness to carry out their tasks is of great importance. They must be able to plan wisely in the interests of the people they govern, and to use their very limited resources efficiently and economically. But this is not enough. They must also ensure that their policy is acceptable to the people they govern.

Before Partition, the relationship between government and people was close. Political groupings were much smaller. The aims and methods of tribal government were familiar, and in many cases the people themselves shared in forming decisions which might affect the welfare of the tribe. Even where government was despotic and cruel, at least its policy was understandable, and if it became too oppressive there was always a hope of successful rebellion, and of change to a ruler who might govern more in agreement with the wishes of the people.

Partition and the establishment of European rule made the business of government much more difficult for people to understand. Its driving force was no longer a council of elders, a chief, or a war-leader, who spoke the same

language, who had the same background of ideas, and the same ignorance of affairs outside the tribal borders. Effective power was transferred to a white race of different language and religion, who ordered their lives by different ideals, and whose motives and policy were often difficult to understand. Their actions, however wise and necessary in their own eyes, might therefore sometimes seem wrong and oppressive to men whose ideas were bounded by the tribe. The new governments differed from the old in yet another way. They were very much more powerful, and there was no possibility of successful rebellion against them.

Within strict limits the mere fact that government was powerful was enough. It could prevent the slave trade and tribal warfare, abolish slavery and inhuman punishments, collect taxation, administer justice and generally maintain peace and good order, even if its actions were sometimes unwelcome or misunderstood. But British policy in the colonies aims at much more than the maintenance of peace and justice. It aims at development. And since the establishment of European rule has let loose upon African society a flood of ideas and influences with which societies organized on a purely tribal basis are quite unfitted to deal, it sees the answer in the development of larger national groupings capable of holding their own in contact with the modern world.

It is in working out the implications of this aim that difficulties arise. Tropical Africa's entry into world trade has led to a need for safeguarding the fertility of the soil. Modern veterinary science has succeeded in controlling many of the epidemics which formerly killed off thousands of African cattle. The growth of migrant labour has affected the balance of social and economic life in many rural areas. The improvement of communications has increased the threat of disease to men and plants. These and other changes have caused problems which call for urgent action

over vast areas, and government cannot effectively enforce the necessary remedies everywhere solely by the exercise of power. Still less can it force people to play an active and willing part in their own development. At the very least it needs to be sure of the passive obedience of most of the people, while full success can only come if government plans are welcomed and actively supported. Such support depends partly on raising the level of education, so that people can better understand the need for action. It equally depends on the people feeling that government is working in their interest and for what they want. In fact, it means that government must develop into a form in which people recognize it as *their* government. It must not remain merely the agent of a foreign, non-African power. As this ideal is reached, so desirable development can go on more quickly. There will be fewer delays, fewer failures, and less waste of limited resources in overcoming passive opposition, resentment, and distrust.

Some progress towards this ideal has already been made. It has necessarily been slow, partly because of the factors explained above, but partly also because of the lack of any strong feeling of common citizenship. Each colony is made up of a great variety of tribes. When British rule began, they had no common interests and no common organization. They were divided by language, religion and custom, and often also by traditional enmities. In fact, their subjection to the same central government was the only link between them.<sup>1</sup> Thus in seeking contact and co-operation with the people government has to deal not with one

<sup>1</sup> During the last fifty years many Africans have become conscious of wider than tribal loyalties—as men of African race, as members of the Christian Church, and as members of the British Empire. But although the new loyalties may be strong, they tend to be wider, just as tribal loyalties are narrower, than the colony. Awareness of strong common interests as citizens of the colony has still to a large extent, to be developed.

people but with many. The political problem in tropical Africa is therefore not merely to provide the means by which a people or nation can best control its government. There is the additional problem of forming many peoples into one nation.

When all this is taken into account, the progress so far made in associating Africans with government is considerable, both with the central and with the local administration. A brief account of it must be given here to provide a background for the discussion of the political problems as yet unsolved.

### *1. The Development of Local Government*

The immediate effect of Partition was to bring Africans under white control. White men had the power to do what seemed good to them. Many of the things they did, e.g. the abolition of slavery, the slave trade, and inhuman punishments, were not actively supported by African opinion, and some, such as the introduction of money taxation, were certainly unpopular. But at this very early stage Africans could only obey. They had little direct influence over policy.

From the first, however, each colonial government necessarily used Africans in much of the detailed work of administration, if only because its white officials were very few in relation to the size of the populations over which they ruled. Where conditions were favourable, the existing framework of native government was used. For example, the Muhammadan emirates of Northern Nigeria already had a well-developed system of administration, taxation, and courts of law which could easily be modified to meet the new circumstances. Therefore they were recognized as local agents of the central government, their authority and duties were defined, and they were placed under the supervision of white officials (Residents) whose duty it was to

see that the orders of the central government were carried out. The use of traditional governments in this way was of great value. It meant that new policy was enforced in familiar ways, and that it was more readily accepted for that reason.

However, there were many cases where existing tribal organization was not used. In parts of West Africa, and over wide areas of East Africa, tribal units were small, and had no developed system of law or taxation which could easily be adapted to the needs of the administration. Sometimes it was hard to find any person or group of persons who were unmistakably in authority over the rest. In other cases, where a suitable form of government existed, its authority had been weakened in the process of Partition, or the chiefs were not considered reliable enough to be used as agents of the central government. For such conditions a more direct form of government was established, and headmen or 'warrant' chiefs were appointed. Many of them were selected from chiefly families, but as government headmen they were in no sense exercising traditional powers through native institutions. They were chosen purely and simply as suitable individuals to be entrusted with limited powers as government agents, and the areas over which they were given authority did not necessarily coincide with tribal boundaries. Government intention in appointing them is well defined in the Nyasaland District Administration (Native) Ordinance of 1912. It hoped that they would

. . . supply a salutary measure of discipline and control in village life to *replace the old system of tribal rule by chiefs*, which has fallen into decay with the evolution of native life and the passage of time.<sup>1</sup>

During the present century the part played by Africans in the work of local administration has grown and expanded under both of the systems briefly described above.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Hailey, p. 463. The italics are mine.

*(a) Traditional Authorities*

The subordination of native authorities to the central government has been an important and necessary factor in their growth, and where they have not been brought fully under government control they have usually made little progress.<sup>1</sup> Where government was in complete control it had the right of effective supervision, and in practice this meant guidance and stimulus. For native administrations were not regarded merely as useful government agencies for helping with the detailed work of local administration. They were valued also as means of training Africans in self-government, and as a basis on which a new order of African society, better adapted than the old to modern conditions, could be built. Therefore the tendency has been to give them new duties and more power as they become fitted to exercise them. On the other hand, where native authorities were left with a degree of independence which made effective supervision by the central government difficult or impossible, their greater 'freedom' often meant freedom to misgovern, or, at the best, failure to adapt themselves to fast-changing social and economic conditions.

Another important factor was the establishment of native administration treasuries, into which a proportion of the poll-tax receipts was paid by the central government. This gave the native authorities funds for paying the salaries of chiefs and other officials. It also gave them a surplus for local spending on local development. Naturally, the funds available varied greatly according to the size and wealth of each local government: from Kano in Northern Nigeria which enjoys a revenue of over £200,000 a year to small administrations with revenues of only a few hundreds. But

<sup>1</sup> E.g. in Barotseland, where the power of the Northern Rhodesian government to intervene was limited by the Agreement of 1890, and on the Gold Coast where the subordination of chiefs to the Gold Coast government was not strictly enough defined.



in every case where there remains a balance, however small, after the payment of salaries, the local government has the stimulus of applying its own funds to its own development. Among the activities thus undertaken are the building and maintenance of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, markets, roads and ferries, the improvement of water supplies, and the provision of veterinary and agricultural services. Kano, the wealthiest of the native administrations, has its own survey department and electricity undertaking. In recent years the tendency has been to encourage native administrations to take over additional functions of this kind, and to increase their share of the poll tax accordingly.

The native authorities also have a big share in administering law. Both the membership and the powers of their courts vary greatly. In some of the larger native administrations the senior courts have complete jurisdiction over all natives in their areas, except for treason, sedition, corruption of government servants, offences against public revenue, and similar offences which might affect the welfare of the colony as a whole. Below these are lower grades of courts with more limited powers and from these there is a right of appeal to the higher grade. This native court system means in effect that the vast majority of all civil and criminal cases affecting Africans are tried in their own courts according to their own law, and by procedures with which they are familiar. Justice is safeguarded where necessary, partly by a right of appeal to the District Officer against native court judgements, but even more by the right of the District Officer to have access to all court records and proceedings, to review judgements, and, if he thinks fit, to transfer cases to his own court.

To these administrative, financial and judicial powers has been added the power to make regulations and executive orders. These vary according to local conditions. They may deal with such various matters as the manufacture

and use of liquor, the carrying of weapons, the safeguarding of water supplies, sanitation, infectious disease, tsetse-fly, migration, the compulsory sowing of subsistence crops, markets, the protection of hillsides and the banks of streams against erosion, afforestation, grazing, and school attendance. Some native administrations have also made wide use of their rule-making power to define and modify local custom. The Resident or Provincial Commissioner has the power to revoke native authority orders which conflict with the policy of the central government, and to direct the issue of orders which the central government wants enforced by the native courts.

The development of native administrations as outlined above has made them very useful instruments of local government. They enable the central government to administer its policy with reasonable efficiency, and in a manner acceptable to the majority of the people, while local problems can be dealt with by local regulation. Moreover, the native authorities can explain both African opinion to the central government and government policy to their own people.

With these advantages it is not surprising that the native administration system has been introduced into areas which were originally placed under government headmen. Thus Sir Donald Cameron applied it in Tanganyika in 1926; the warrant chiefs of south-eastern Nigeria were replaced by traditional authorities after the Aba riots of 1929; it was introduced into the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast in 1932; and in Northern Rhodesia the Native Authority Ordinance of 1936, which replaced a less effective Ordinance of 1929, stressed the need of making full use of tribal institutions and for the setting up of native treasuries.

In some cases the change-over involved much planning, especially in those areas where traditional authority was associated with social groups, such as the family, which

were far too small to act effectively as local government units. This difficulty was overcome in south-eastern Nigeria by grouping families with common ancestry into clans, and establishing clan councils on which each family could be represented. Clan courts were similarly set up to deal with judicial work, and where necessary in order to avoid jealousy it was arranged that presidency of court and council should be held in rotation by the members. The effect of this grouping was to establish some three hundred native administrations. Their treasuries were tiny and their powers limited compared with the large native administrations of the north and west, but, nevertheless, they were of equal or greater value in making government acceptable, and in providing training in political affairs for men of character, education, and ability. It is said that the tax rebate to the clan treasuries soon completely changed the once hostile outlook of the people towards the introduction of taxation.

Where native administrations are very small they have tended to overcome this disadvantage by grouping themselves into larger units for certain purposes. Some do not keep separate treasuries but share a common treasury with their neighbours. This is true of south-eastern Nigeria, and of parts of Tanganyika where some native authorities consist of federations of chiefs, or tribal councils of petty chiefs belonging to the same tribe. Each chief retains authority over his own area, but the treasury is shared, and the rules made by joint authority apply throughout the federation. As in south-eastern Nigeria, the presidency of the federation may pass in rotation from one chief to another, but in some cases they have preferred to appoint one of themselves as permanent head.

While the larger and wealthier native administrations do not need to federate, they sometimes consult with one another on matters of common interest. In Nigeria, both in Yorubaland and in the Northern Provinces, chiefs have

met annually for this purpose. In Northern Rhodesia, regional councils on which native administrations, urban advisory councils, and welfare associations are represented have been set up. Provincial councils, on which native authorities sit, have been established in Nyasaland and on the Gold Coast.

(b) *Local Native Councils (Kenya)*

Local government in Kenya has developed on different lines. Tribal institutions as they existed at the time of the British occupation were considered unsuitable for use in local administration, largely because their age-grade system was not understood, and the Village Headmen Ordinance of 1902 provided for the appointment of government headmen. Their main duties were to keep order, arrest criminals, and repair roads. Later they were given power to make rules on various subjects, such as the maintenance of clean water supplies and the control of liquor and infectious disease. In recent years they have also been used to help in tax collection.

Public opinion has usually been consulted before appointing them. In some areas this has tended to favour the best available man: in others, the appointment of a traditional chief.<sup>1</sup>

At first, headmen also tried petty cases among natives, but they lost this power in 1907, and in 1913 native courts were established. These differ from the traditional native courts recognized elsewhere in two important ways: (i) the area of their jurisdiction does not necessarily coincide with tribal boundaries; and (ii) neither hereditary chiefs nor headmen are *ex-officio* members, although they may sometimes be appointed as individuals. Court members are

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that in spite of the long continuance of the headman system customary chiefs retain much of their prestige, and are often of value in helping to settle disputes among their own people.

usually appointed after some kind of selection at public meetings or 'barazas'.

Under the Native Tribunals Ordinance of 1930 these courts have power to enforce (i) native law and custom; (ii) local rules made by administrative officers or by native local authorities; and (iii) any laws which they are authorized by government to enforce. Appeals against their decisions go to native appeal tribunals, where they exist, and thence to the district and provincial commissioners. The district commissioner has the right to revise the judgments of the native tribunals, or to transfer cases to his own court.

Local native councils were established in 1924 to advise and legislate on local affairs. They were very strictly controlled by the central government. The District Officer was the *ex-officio* president and retained all executive power. The members were appointed by the central government, and all resolutions they made had to be approved by the Governor-in-Council before they were given the force of law. The councils had treasuries, but they received no share of the general tax. They had to levy local rates, and thus tended to be poorer than the native administrations of Nigeria which received a substantial share (50 per cent to 75 per cent) of the poll tax. Moreover, they depended almost entirely on government departments to carry out work for which they voted funds.

In spite of these apparent drawbacks, the system contained the germ of much future progress. Although councillors were appointed by the central government, the people had a share in selecting them. Although at first their revenues were small, they are rapidly increasing. They have grown, for example, from about £80,000 in 1936 to £111,000 in 1938, and to over £212,000 in 1944. Revenue for 1946 is estimated at over £350,000. These funds are spent chiefly on education, medical work, agriculture, and roads and bridges. Smaller sums are spent on

water supplies, veterinary services, and forestry. In addition, some councils have taken an interest in the development of local industries, such as ghee-making, and spinning and weaving.

The councils have also made much use of their rule-making powers, sometimes at the request of government and sometimes on their own initiative. Rules have been made, for instance, for the maintenance of roads and the control of cattledips and markets, for the planting of trees, the enforcement of health measures, the growing of certain kinds of food crops, the safeguarding of the soil, and the drying and curing of skins. Some councils have also passed by-laws defining or modifying native custom in respect of dowry payments, female circumcision, and the transfer of rights in land.

The councils, like the traditional native administrations elsewhere, have also been useful in bringing native opinion on matters of local or general interest to the notice of the central government, although it is true that a good deal has depended in the past on the extent to which the official chairman has allowed free expression of opinion on matters of other than local interest. There have, in fact, been complaints from such societies as the Kikuyu Central Association and the Kavirondo Taxpayers' Welfare Association that the councils were too much under official control, and that they did not accurately represent African opinion. But justification for such complaints may have been removed by new arrangements (1946) for the popular election of council members, and by proposals for giving the councils the right to elect their own chairmen.

*(c) Urban and other Special Areas*

The areas administered by the types of native authority so far described are predominantly rural. The association of Africans with urban local government has made less progress, except in towns which already existed as tradi-

tional seats of native government before the British occupation. In such cases, when the native administration was recognized as the local authority, it naturally continued to control town as well as country. Kano and Ibadan in Nigeria afford outstanding examples of traditional authority adapting itself with reasonable success to the requirements of modern urban conditions.

A more difficult problem is provided by towns of recent growth, such as Nairobi in Kenya and the mining towns of the Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia, or by seaports to which a large population of wage-earning Africans has been attracted during the last few decades. There commerce and industry—the reason for their growth—is mainly in the hands of Europeans and Asians, on whom, also, most of the large African population depends for employment. Some of these Africans have settled down in the towns more or less permanently, but the majority forms a shifting population of immigrants from rural areas, to which they expect to return after a stay of a few months or years.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that where local government has been delegated by the central government into other hands, it has passed mainly to the European (and Asian) minorities. Even so, Africans are not entirely shut out, for in many towns there are Urban Advisory Councils on which Africans sit with Europeans to advise on matters affecting African interests. A further important advance was made recently (1944) in Kenya when the Nairobi Municipal Council asked government to nominate one or two Africans to the Council to secure direct representation of African interests.

In West Africa the situation is a little different. There, Africans have for a long time enjoyed a greater share in urban government than on the East Coast. In Lagos, the most important urban centre in West Africa, there is a Town Council with official, nominated, and elected members, but its powers are limited. A good many of the duties

normally carried out by a town council, such as town planning, slum clearance, water supply and education are still left to the central government.

The provision of suitable courts for the trial of civil and criminal cases may also be a source of difficulty. 'European' law cannot properly meet the needs of people whose background is still that of the tribe, although they are temporarily living away from it. And, where the populations include people of many different tribes, there is no one body of accepted customary law which can be enforced. This difficulty has sometimes been overcome, as in Nairobi, by setting up a mixed court, and by nominating as its members suitable persons from lists submitted by the town's tribal associations. Elsewhere, as in Tanganyika, native subordinate magistrates have been appointed to deal with the same problem.

The courts thus set up may enforce local rules and by-laws, try tax cases, and deal with most civil and minor criminal cases. They are gradually evolving a type of Bantu 'natural' law (an African *ius gentium*) for cases involving men of different tribes where the customary law of no single tribe can be justly applied. The judicial needs of the mixed African population of the Copper Belt towns of Northern Rhodesia have been met in a somewhat similar fashion since 1937. Mixed urban native courts have been established on which each of the native authorities of the main labour-supplying areas has a representative. It is said that these courts have been of great value in defining native customary law, and in adapting it to the very different conditions of the urban mining areas.

## 2. *The Central Government*

It was stressed earlier in this chapter that one important factor in the development of native local government institutions was that they should be effectively under the



control of the central government. Where such control was established the native governments could be trained into greater efficiency, and as this happened the central government was able to delegate to them greater powers and a wider variety of duties.

This same factor of effective subordination enters also into the relationship between the British government and each of the tropical African territories, except in the case of Southern Rhodesia which already is almost in the position of a Dominion. The British government has entire control of all foreign policy affecting colonies, and it takes responsibility for protecting them in time of war. It appoints and controls the Governor, who, although he has supreme and overriding authority within his colony, can only act in certain matters subject to its approval. Thus, for instance, the Governor must submit to it any proposals for important new legislation, and it has the power to veto any law made in the colony, even though the Governor may have given his assent to it. It also reserves the right itself to make laws for the colony, should it wish to do so. It controls finance, for its assent must be obtained to the annual estimates, for large public works, and for the raising of colonial loans. It controls, through its Secretary of State for the Colonies, appointments to all senior posts in the colonial civil service. It also supervises the administration of justice. It alone, on the advice of the Privy Council, can dismiss judges, and the same Privy Council hears appeals from the colonial courts.

These wide powers have been used to ensure that colonial government is carried on in accordance with the aims of British colonial policy, and in particular that in each colony the welfare of all the people, of whatever race, class, religion, or level of education, should be equally safeguarded. It is, indeed, this aim which is held to justify the continuance of British rule; but it is qualified by the further aim, second only in importance to the first, that

'control should be relaxed in proportion to the existence in any colony of a population qualified to take a share in the management of its affairs and to provide *impartially* for the welfare of all elements in the population'.<sup>1</sup>

We have already noted some progress towards this second aim in the sphere of local government. Similar progress towards the association of the African peoples in the management of the central government has necessarily been more difficult, if only because the affairs of the central government tend to be more complex, and to demand a wide background of education and experience which was almost entirely lacking among Africans in the early days of British rule.

However, very early in the history of most colonies provision was made for the Governor to receive advice on the exercise of his powers by the establishment of legislative councils. These have usually consisted of a majority of government officials and of a minority of unofficial members. The latter may either be nominated by the Governor, or they may be elected. In either case they usually represent certain special interests or communities within the colony, such as large towns, associations of commerce or industry, or racial minorities. Native African interests were at first represented by the nomination of one or two Europeans, usually missionaries, but for a long time on the West Coast, and recently in East Africa, African interests have increasingly been represented by educated men of African race.

In no case has a legislative council power in any way comparable with that of the British parliament. It may debate and vote on legislative proposals put before it. It may criticize annual estimates. And it may question the government on detailed matters concerning its administration. Criticism from unofficial members may often lead

<sup>1</sup> Professor A. Berriedale Keith: *The British Commonwealth of Nations*, Longmans, 1940, p. 38. The italics are mine.

government to modify its original proposals, but it need not do so. The official members have to vote for the government proposals, and where they form the majority they can always outvote the unofficial members. Where there is an unofficial majority, the Governor retains the power to override his legislative council.

The Governor is also assisted by an executive council of the chief officials of the colony, to which unofficial members have been also appointed in some colonies. European unofficial members have sat on executive council in Kenya since 1919, and Africans on the executive councils of Nigeria and the Gold Coast since 1942. The duties of such councils are to advise the Governor on problems of administration, the preparation of estimates, and on legislation which it is proposed to put before the legislative councils. Their proceedings are secret, and, like legislative councils, they can only advise the Governor with whom all final power within the colony rests.

Although except in the special case of Southern Rhodesia, the British government has not yet parted with any part of its authority over the colonies, and the Governor still retains his supreme power within his own colony, in practice the unofficial members of executive and legislative councils exercise an increasing influence over their government's policy. To put this at its lowest, no Governor can feel happy at forcing his proposals through the legislative councils against the unanimous and public vote of all the unofficial members, and he has every reason to try to modify his proposals in order to win their assent. He will refuse to do so only when some important principle is at stake, and when he is certain that the unofficial members, representing as they do mainly powerful minority interests, are basing their opposition rather on the particular interests of the minorities they represent than on the interests of the colonial community as a whole.

Africans are now rapidly increasing their representation

on legislative councils. On the West Coast they have had members on the Nigerian council for many years, either as elected members for Lagos<sup>1</sup> (3) and Calabar (1), or by nomination of the Governor. On the Gold Coast a new constitution has been introduced (1946) which gives unofficial African members a clear majority over the official and nominated members. There are now twelve official and nominated members and eighteen elected members—five to represent Ashanti, four to represent the municipalities, and nine elected by the Joint Provincial Council. In Sierra Leone, also, there are African members of Legislative Council. Some are elected to represent the Colony, others are nominated to represent the Protectorate.

Until very recently no Africans sat on legislative councils in East Africa, but a beginning has now been made. In 1944 one was nominated to the Kenya legislative council, in 1945 three were appointed in Uganda, and in 1946 two in Tanganyika. There is not yet, at the time of writing, any *direct* representation of Africans on the legislative councils of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia.

Where direct representation of Africans is numerically small, or (1946) still entirely lacking, as in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, other means have usually been provided which may enable African opinion to express itself. Thus in Northern Rhodesia, for example, eight regional councils were set up in 1943 consisting of representatives of native authorities, urban advisory councils, and African welfare associations, and in 1946 an African Representative Council for the whole territory was established. Similarly, in Nyasaland (1944) provincial councils of chiefs and other responsible Africans were set up as a first step towards forming an African council (1946) to represent the whole territory.

So far we have only considered how Africans may influence government policy through membership of execu-

<sup>1</sup> For mention of the new Nigerian constitution see p. 167.

tive, legislative and advisory councils. They can exercise an influence even more powerful as they come to occupy responsible official positions in the government service. Government policy, as it is presented to legislative councils for approval, is necessarily largely based on the views of the heads of the government departments responsible for carrying it out, and their views, in turn, are affected by those of the senior members of their departments. Government officials can therefore influence policy at the time it is being formed, as well as the way in which it is carried out. And if Africans are to be successful in obtaining a real control over the affairs of the territory, it is as important for them to hold senior responsible posts under the government as to be represented on legislative council.

Although on the West Coast many Africans are already employed in senior technical and judicial posts and, on the Gold Coast for example, some Africans have also recently been appointed to the Administrative Service, it is true nevertheless that the higher civil service in tropical Africa is staffed largely by Europeans. This has been unavoidable, because very few Africans in the past have been able to obtain the necessary academic and professional qualifications for such posts. This difficulty should be lessened in future by the new scheme for the organization of the Colonial Service.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Col. 197. *Organization of the Colonial Service*. H.M.S.O. 1946. Under this scheme the British government offers to contribute £2,500,000 towards the cost of providing opportunities for increasing the supply of qualified colonial candidates for posts in their own service.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: GENERAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

SINCE Partition tribal governments have lost their independence, and any powers they now have they exercise, not in their own right, but as approved agents of the central government. It is unlikely that any progress towards self-government will restore to them their former independence, or any part of it. Modern economic development—the growth of towns and industries employing wage-labour, and the extension of cash-cropping—causes problems which cannot satisfactorily be controlled by anything smaller than a national government. It may, indeed, eventually lead to the merging of colonies into still larger political units.<sup>1</sup> In their pursuit of effective self-government, therefore, Africans must aim beyond local government to control at the centre. Full political freedom can only be won on a national basis.

This is so well understood by the active minority of politically conscious Africans that they are sometimes led to rate the importance of local government too low, especially if it still happens to be in the hands of illiterate and conservative chiefs or elders, and subject to strict control by white administrative officers. Its importance should be estimated, however, not so much by what it is now, but by the place it must occupy in the future self-governing State, and in the process by which self-government is reached.

Viewed from this angle, even the poorest and least

<sup>1</sup> It is awareness of this need which has been the cause of past proposals for Closer Union in East Africa, and of the recent proposals or territorial reorganization suggested in Colonial No. 191.

efficient of native local governments becomes important. The ordinary man will remain in much closer contact with it than he is ever likely to be with the central government. As local government becomes more efficient and more wealthy he will increasingly rely on it to provide him with the services he requires: for medical treatment when he is ill, for the schools his children will attend, for the repair of the roads he uses, for the control of sanitation and building, for the maintenance of order, the arrest of thieves, the settlement of his quarrels, and the interpretation of local custom. These, after all, are the things he hopes for in return for the payment of taxes, and an efficient local government is the best means of providing them. It has greater knowledge than the central government of local needs and problems. Its officers are local men who have the same background and speak the same language as the people they serve. By comparison, the central government is in the hands of strangers. Its business is harder to understand, and is often of little local interest.

While local government is thus useful in adapting central government policy to meet local needs, it may also help to influence future policy by keeping the central government in touch with the views and interests of the common people. The educated classes are able to express their views in the newspapers or in political associations. Illiterate Africans cannot do this, but it is important that their views should be known and their interests considered, before decisions affecting them are taken. Local governments are necessarily kept in close contact with local problems, and chiefs, council members and elders, some of whom may be illiterate themselves, are often better able to represent the views of the common people than the educated but often urban-minded minority. Local governments thus provide a valuable means by which the central government can be influenced by a large section of public opinion which has no other easy means of expressing itself.

Local government, however, may have a much more important part to play than merely to bring local public opinion to the notice of the central government. Ideally, self-government should be *democratic* self-government: i.e. some means should be found by which the people may not only influence their government, but also ultimately control it. This raises some intensely difficult problems. For example, how is it possible, if at all, for a largely illiterate and ignorant population to select people who will in any real sense represent them on a central assembly? And how are such representatives to have acquired the necessary knowledge and experience to enable them to decide matters of policy wisely and in the true interests of all the people?

The ordinary citizen understands little about world and colonial affairs. His main interests are his family, his home, his work and his recreations. He may be quite unfitted to judge between rival policies urged by those who wish to be elected as his representatives, and the more ignorant he is the more likely it becomes that he may be misled by easy promises into electing the wrong people. In Britain this disadvantage has been overcome to some extent by the development of universal compulsory education, and by the growth of a free press which represents all shades of opinion. We have seen in Chapter VII that many years may pass before a reasonable standard of universal education can be achieved in tropical Africa. Until that happens representative institutions based on the British model may be a source of danger, and some other method of representation may have to be found. Local government representation on a central government legislature may provide a satisfactory answer to this problem: provided always, of course, that the local governments themselves have become truly representative of their people.

The development of a strong and satisfactory system of local government is important in yet another way. Govern-



ment is an art. Wisdom, patience, understanding and sympathy with other people's views, readiness to modify opinion in the light of new facts and new circumstances, willingness to sink personal and local self-interest in the wider interests of all: these and other qualities are needed by men who hope to play their part in the exercise of government. Local government fosters these qualities, and provides a training and a testing ground for them. In Britain a very large proportion of members of Parliament have first shown their ability and gained their experience in local government work, or by helping to administer and control large democratic organizations such as trade unions or friendly societies. If tropical Africa is to be well and wisely governed by Africans bearing full responsibility, it is equally desirable that they should have had similar chances of winning the confidence of their fellow-men and of showing outstanding ability. It is obvious that the success of any representative system must depend, not only on the good sense of the electors, but also on the quality of the men who are available to offer themselves for election.

Local government can only assist political development in the ways described above if it possesses certain qualities. It must be efficient if it is to provide the local services which people need. It must be capable of accepting responsibility delegated by the central government if it is to help in training citizens in the exercise of political power. It must be acceptable to the people if it is to be of any value as a channel by which their views can reach and influence the policy of the central government.

From the first British policy has aimed at fostering these qualities. Wherever possible it has used traditional tribal authorities. Where that has been impossible it has often, though not always, consulted the people before appointing government headmen. It has aimed at increasing efficiency by means of central government supervision and control. And, in the case of local authorities which have shown

their ability to undertake greater responsibility, it has delegated to them wider powers and a greater variety of duties. The progress which has so far been made along these lines was briefly outlined in the last chapter.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that local governments have developed very far towards the ideal which we must hope they will reach eventually. Very many authorities are inefficient by any but the lowest standard, and are incapable of using well any real measure of delegated responsibility. Equally, many local governments in their present form are not wholly acceptable to important minorities of the people over whom they rule and, even where they are generally acceptable, they may be of little value in helping on positive political development if they are unduly authoritarian, so that the people have little say in the conduct of their own affairs. It is not enough that local government should be passively accepted. If our aim is responsible self-government it must encourage and stimulate an active interest among the people in the ordering of their own affairs, and, as interest is stimulated, provide a means by which it can find expression.

Our aim must be to make local government more efficient, more responsible, and more democratic, but if we think that efficiency is the chief need we must be prepared for slower progress in other ways. If, on the other hand we stress the importance of the people exercising real political responsibility in local affairs, we must sometime be prepared to accept a lower standard in local administration. It is a hard choice. It is easy to understand the unwillingness of zealous government administrative and technical officers to see desirable development held up until a conservative local authority can be persuaded—not ordered—to act: and, when action is finally taken, to see it ineffective if the local administration is inefficient. And, of course, no central government can be justified in handing over *essential* government services to an inefficient local

administration. But there is a wide field of desirable government activity for which local governments might increasingly be made wholly responsible. Any loss through initial inefficiency might well be more than offset by the educative value of the exercise of full responsibility.

Africans to-day are frequently criticized by other races as irresponsible. The criticism may sometimes be well-founded, but is it reasonable to expect a well-developed sense of responsibility—and especially of political responsibility—among a people who for more than fifty years have had every important public issue decided for them by an alien governing race? A sense of responsibility can only be acquired by a grant of freedom to exercise it, and this involves freedom to do badly as well as to do well. It is, after all, by making mistakes that we learn from experience. Good government in Africa might be bought at too high a cost if it were to mean denying to Africans for too long the most valuable part of their political education.<sup>1</sup>

While discussing this point we have necessarily assumed that local governments do, in fact, already satisfactorily represent their people: for the granting of more local responsibility would clearly not help forward self-government in any worthwhile sense if it merely gave more power to an inefficient and unrepresentative African minority. There is less danger of this happening where the British have established new local government institutions than where they have made use of traditional tribal authorities. The former are new, and therefore are not tied by custom and precedent. They can be modified at will to meet changed circumstances and new needs. Kenya local native councils, in fact, are already beginning to take on a democratic representative character.

<sup>1</sup> A good many local governments theoretically enjoy considerable responsibility. Such responsibility may be strictly limited in fact where the central government maintains a strict control over the allocation of expenditure.

With traditional native authorities the situation may be very different. They were recognized in the early days of British rule because they were both acceptable to the people and reasonably representative of them. They can justify continued recognition only while they retain these qualities, and the fact that they were acceptable fifty years ago does not necessarily mean that they are still acceptable under the vastly different circumstances of to-day.

Most tribal government before Partition, though not necessarily democratic, was in some measure representative of the people. Authority usually lay with the chiefs in council rather than with the chief alone. Moreover, in practice, the tribal government had little executive power, and this was mainly exercised by village authorities whose appointment was regulated by custom and who were neither paid nor controlled by the chief. The chief's power was further limited by his need of popularity. An unpopular chief faced an ever-present danger of successful rebellion.

The establishment of British rule has modified this situation. It has made the chief stronger by giving him the backing of a strong central government, and it has given him new executive functions which have increased his control over the villages. Also, since it is quicker and more 'efficient' to deal with one man rather than with many, it has sometimes happened that the central administration has recognized the chief, rather than the chief-in-council, as the effective local authority. Where this has happened traditional local governments may have become more powerful and efficient, but also less educative and representative. Efficiency in carrying out central government policy, as we have seen, is not necessarily the only and all-important aim of African political development.

The representative value of traditional local governments has also been affected by modern economic and social development. The migration of tribesmen to work on

mines and plantations has implanted in many tribesmen a desire for change which is not always shared by their traditional authorities. Change is also desired by the educated minorities who are often impatient and resentful of conservative chiefs and elders, many of whom are illiterates. And an additional problem arises where economic development has led to the establishment of colonies of 'stranger' natives within the tribal boundaries. Are these to remain indefinitely unrepresented on local government because it is based on traditional forms?

It would be contrary to all accepted policy if local governments became, in fact, less and less representative of their people as they grew in power and responsibility. Yet that would be the danger if the form of local governments remained fixed by tradition. It must therefore not remain fixed. It must be adapted. In fact this process of adaptation has already begun, and it is in this connexion that the tribal council becomes of great importance.

We have already noted that in former times the chiefs usually ruled with the advice of a council of elders, but that since Partition the power of the chief has tended sometimes to grow at their expense. If sound political development is to be encouraged it is very necessary that this trend should be reversed. The council or chief-in-council, rather than the chief alone should be the seat of authority, and the body to whom any delegation of increased responsibility by the central government should be made.<sup>1</sup>

It is equally important that the councils should be more truly representative than they are at present. Most of the existing councils consist of elderly men with little education. They can only become fully representative by the addition of other members who can represent the newer political elements in tribal society—the returned migrant

<sup>1</sup> In the past the central government has often gazetted the chief as the native authority, to the neglect of the council, e.g. in Yorubaland in Nigeria.

labourers, the educated classes, African strangers, and, sometimes, women.

A development of this kind has, indeed, already taken place in some areas, and more particularly in south-western Nigeria. There it has been hastened by pressure from political associations such as the Youth Movement, which has already succeeded in securing non-traditional representation on some Yoruba councils, and on recently established local government advisory boards. But it should be noted that the Yoruba political associations have demanded representation only for themselves, i.e. for the relatively small educated class. They have shown little enthusiasm for any proposal to make tribal councils more broadly representative of the people as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

In the rest of West Africa and in East Africa there has also been some adaptation of traditional councils,<sup>2</sup> notably in the case of the Buganda kingdom of Uganda, where the councils have recently (1945) been reconstituted to include representatives of the people, as well as of the hierarchy of official chiefs. Least progress in 'popularizing' local governments has been made in northern Nigeria where village councils hardly exist, and where at present educated men are too few to have much political influence. Nevertheless, the need for a more representative type of local government in the Emirates is real, both to provide a lawful outlet for criticism and discontent, and to begin the political education of the people. The need can possibly best be met by encouraging the formation of representative village and district councils. In some Emirates this is already being attempted.

<sup>1</sup> In south-eastern Nigeria on the other hand political associations, such as the Ibibio Union, are more democratic in outlook, and have not secured representation for the educated classes to the exclusion of the common people.

<sup>2</sup> On Urban Advisory Councils and on the Kenya Local Native Councils there is of course a broader basis of representation, but these councils are not traditional.

Wherever policy calls for improvement in the status of councils, and the enlargement of their membership by the appointment of more popular representatives, there arises the question of how the new members are to be chosen. There are a number of alternative methods. The councils themselves can nominate additional members, but if the existing members are unduly conservative, they are not likely to make nominations acceptable to the 'progressives'. Alternatively, the political societies can be asked to nominate, and this is the method which has frequently been followed in south-western Nigeria. It has the advantage that it gives representation to those who have been most actively demanding it, but it does not meet the larger need for *popular* representation. If councils are to fulfil their proper educative function, they must not only be representative of existing political feeling. They must encourage a feeling of political responsibility in those who are still apathetic. A broad basis of representation should therefore be aimed at. Admittedly, this is sometimes difficult in areas where most people are illiterate, but in most places there already exist village councils of one sort or another which are usually constituted on a democratic basis. It might well be that an effective system of village council representation on district councils, and of district councils on tribal councils, would be more practicable, as well as more educative and truly representative, than those systems of direct election or minority representation which are usually preferred by the educated class. Little would be gained by substituting for authority based exclusively on tradition the minority rule of a few sectional interests. It may well be argued that educated people should not get representation as a class, but by winning the confidence of the people. In so far as they succeed in this, and thus fit themselves to represent the whole community, so they might expect to predominate on the councils. But in that case educated councillors would sit as representa-

tives responsible to the people generally, and not merely to their own class.

For urban councils representation in the larger townships has usually been based on adult suffrage subject to a property qualification. This is the case, for example, in the Gold Coast towns of Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi-Takoradi. It has been suggested that in some cases better representation can be obtained by abolishing the property qualification and basing the representation on organized crafts, trades, and guilds. On the East Coast, where Africans in townships may belong to many tribes, representation on urban advisory councils is given to the urban tribal associations, and appears to work satisfactorily.

Local authority councils may also help to solve a problem of another kind. In most traditional native governments there was no marked distinction between legislative, executive and judicial functions. The making of rules, the judging of disputes and the enforcement of authority were in the hands of the same persons. The effect of modern colonial development has been to make each of these functions more exacting, and more demanding of special knowledge and experience. Local authorities have not merely to enforce existing custom. They are development agencies which make rules for many new purposes, and they must often adapt existing custom to meet a changing economic and social situation. Also, their executive functions are becoming increasingly important and specialized. This all means, in effect, that neither the chief nor any individual member of council can have all the special knowledge required for the efficient working of local government. This problem is not easy to solve where the real authority is in the hands of a single chief. But where authority is shared among many, e.g. in a council, some of its functions can be delegated to members who have special knowledge or experience. Thus while the rule-making power and general control would be exercised by



the council as a whole, it may delegate the exercise of most of its judicial power to a few members who have special knowledge of customary law, and its executive power to a committee of which one member might become responsible for schools, one for agriculture, and so on. It may also appoint a finance committee of its more literate and money-minded councillors to advise it on finance and to prepare its budget. Such committees would work under the general control of the council and be responsible to it. This kind of development has, in fact, already taken place in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, among the Ibibio of south-eastern Nigeria, and in parts of Tanganyika.

So far we have considered only the dual problems of making local governments more representative and more responsible, and we have noted the great potential value of the council in assisting such development. We have noted, too, that a grant of more responsibility may involve some immediate sacrifice of efficiency, and that this may well be justified by the very great need for political education which only the exercise of real responsibility can give.

The exercise of more effective responsibility by Africans in local government must mean freedom to reject the advice of the central government in those matters over which full responsibility has been granted. But it need not be assumed that its advice would always be rejected, or that inefficiency would necessarily follow even in backward areas. The central government can still advise and persuade where it no longer orders, and if its administrative and technical officers are men whom the people among whom they work like and trust, their advice will usually be welcomed and acted on. Local government may become efficient more slowly, perhaps, but it will also be more educative.

The necessity for liking and trust between central government officers and the people whom they serve raises several important questions. The desirable bond of friend-

ship and understanding can only grow where European and African officers of the central government get to know the people of local communities well, and acquire much local knowledge of language and customs. This, in fact, often happens, but it is hindered by the too frequent transfer of both administrative and technical officers from one district to another. When this happens the whole slow process has to be begun over again, if indeed in view of the possibility of another early transfer, the officer feels that it is worth attempting in his new district. The evil effect of frequent transfers is now well recognized and understood.

There is another difficulty, for very many officers are so overburdened with routine office work that they are too seldom able to tour their districts and make frequent contact with the people. This is particularly true of administrative officers, who are often heavily burdened with petty court cases, the payment of home remittances from migrant labourers, and by petty accountancy duties. Some of this work might well be done by native authorities, and some by government clerks, if they became more efficient and reliable. There is also room for the development of an intermediate administrative grade, which could relieve the district officer at once of many of his less responsible duties to the great benefit of his most important work.

In practice, the extent of the responsibility delegated to local authorities will be determined by several factors: (i) by the readiness of the central government to allow lower standards than its own in such services as sanitation, market control, road maintenance, schools and dispensaries; (ii) by the willingness of its technical departments to train local government staff; (iii) by the funds available for spending on local services; and (iv) by the size of the local authority.

At present local authorities are financed in different ways in different territories. In Nigeria, Tanganyika,

Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, their chief source of revenue is a rebate granted by the central government from the proceeds of the direct tax. In other colonies they are usually financed by a system of separate local taxation. Of these two methods the second would seem to be preferable for several reasons. If we value the development of local government for the training it may give in responsibility and local initiative, it is undesirable to have the size of local revenue largely determined by a factor outside local control, i.e. by the central government. Separate local taxation, on the other hand, enables a progressive people to provide for themselves at their own expense new local government services for which other areas may not yet be ready; and it encourages a local feeling of responsibility for expenditure, since waste or inefficiency means a higher rate of local tax. There is also a need in this connexion for an audit service which would teach a simpler method of accounting and care of public money than the complex system used by the central government. Neither administrative officers nor private firms of auditors are entirely suited to this work.

Another problem is that of size. If local authorities are so small that their treasuries are therefore limited to a revenue of a few hundreds a year, they will be unable to develop a sufficient variety of local government services, because they will be unable to find the funds to staff and maintain them. On the other hand, if they are too large, it will be difficult to develop that close contact with the people which is so educative a factor in local government affairs. Thus the size of native authorities is a matter of importance. Some progress has, in fact, already been made with the federation or amalgamation of very small native authorities into larger units with a common treasury, particularly in south-eastern Nigeria and in parts of Tanganyika.

## LAW IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

IN a stable society in which the need for change is not much felt, law tends to be valued chiefly as a means of securing order and maintaining existing social relations. This was true of law in tribal society before Partition. 'Its primary object has . . . been well defined as the desire to maintain social equilibrium, and its remedies are intended to restore any disturbance of that equilibrium.'<sup>1</sup>

It was for this reason that the great majority of offences against law and custom were regarded as *civil* cases which could satisfactorily be settled by the payment of compensation to the injured family or clan. *Criminal* offences, i.e. those which were felt to offend against society as a whole—were few, although witchcraft, treason to the chief and a few other offences were so regarded, and then the remedy was usually the elimination of the offender from society, either by banishment or death.

Another noteworthy feature of tribal law was its lack of penal sanctions, such as police and prisons, which are commonly used to assist the enforcement of law in modern society. This was partly due to the fact, already explained, that most offences were remedied by the payment of compensation rather than by the punishment of the offender, and partly to the nature of tribal law. There was no statutory law. Law was customary, and it was supported by tradition and by religious belief.<sup>2</sup> It safeguarded what society deemed good, and when it was seriously broken

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the common belief that custom had the support of the ancestors as well as the living members of the tribe. To break the law might bring down supernatural punishment on every member of the group to which the offender belonged.

there 'exists finally the sanction of tribal punishment, due to a reaction in anger and indignation of the whole community'.<sup>1</sup> Under tribal conditions this provided a far more powerful sanction for the punishment of the offender in modern African society than police and prisons. At present the penalties of fine or imprisonment for breaking colonial law often involve little or no social stigma.

When British rule was established British law became the basis of law. It was subsequently modified or supplemented according to need by local laws or regulations, but subject always to the right of the Crown to disallow them, or, if it wished, to make laws itself which would be binding on the colony. This latter right is very rarely used.

One effect of Partition was therefore to establish in each territory a body of law which had originally been developed by white men for their own use in their own country. This meant the setting up of courts of justice staffed by specially trained judges and magistrates, and of subordinate courts presided over by administrative officers. The judgements given in these courts were based on principles of right and justice which were not necessarily understood or accepted by Africans—e.g. in cases of witchcraft—and the courts themselves were conducted according to rules of procedure which Africans equally did not understand.<sup>2</sup>

In practice most Africans are little affected by these changes because the British courts deal with only a small proportion of the total number of cases in which Africans are involved. Most of these are dealt with by the native courts which still enforce tribal law and custom. The colonial or protectorate courts deal only with serious cases beyond the competence of the native courts; with cases for which trial by native court is thought unsuitable; with cases involving non-natives; and, in some territories

<sup>1</sup> B. Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, Kegan Paul, 1926, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Such as rules of admissibility of evidence and of oaths.

with appeals from the judgements of the native courts. Moreover, it has been laid down as a general principle, that where Africans appear before colonial or protectorate courts the case should be decided 'according to substantial law and justice without undue regard to technicalities of procedure and without undue delay', and that 'every court shall be guided by native law so far as it is applicable and is not repugnant to justice or morality or inconsistent with any Order in Council or Ordinance'.<sup>1</sup> The courts thus enforce two kinds of law; the one British in origin, and the other tribal.

But British rule has had a profound influence on the scope and nature of the law administered by the native courts. We have noted that tribal law was tribal custom, and that it was chiefly valued for keeping society stable. In the modern State there is also law of another kind—statutory or enacted law—which is chiefly valued as an instrument of change. Statutory law consists of law made by the legislature for any special purpose which the government deems good. It is very important during periods of rapid change, and when new situations arise for which existing law and custom give no guide. Moreover, custom which was good under the old conditions may become actually harmful under the new. In either case government can provide a remedy by making new laws.

In British tropical Africa law of this kind is made by legislative councils.<sup>2</sup> It covers a wide range of new needs created by the social and economic development of recent years: and although a good deal of it does not apply to Africans who are still living under tribal conditions, there

<sup>1</sup> Uganda, Order in Council, quoted in Hailey, p. 274, as one example of a principle generally applied.

<sup>2</sup> A great deal of subsidiary legislation is made under powers delegated by legislative councils. E.g. a legislative council may give the Governor, the Governor-in-Council, or a Head of a Department, or a local government power to make Rules and Regulations on certain matters. When such Rules are made they have the force of law.

are many laws which do, and the native courts are often expected to enforce them. Thus there are cultivation and grazing rules designed to protect the land against erosion and to safeguard water supplies; health and sanitary rules to prevent the spread of disease; and rules to control the manufacture of liquor, the use of markets, the carrying of weapons and so on. Rules like these are made to protect society against evils which can be foreseen, and any man who breaks them injures not merely one or two individuals, but everyone in the group to which he belongs. The effect of statutory law of this kind, therefore, is greatly to increase the variety of criminal offences which cannot be settled on the basis of compensation, but which involve the punishment of the offender.

At present it is often difficult to get proper observance of such laws for several reasons. In the first place they lack the support of custom, and many people neither understand the reason for them nor feel that they are doing wrong by disobeying them. Native authorities often fail to enforce them strictly for the same reason. Secondly, statutory law lacks the sanctions of customary law<sup>1</sup> and it may be difficult to find other effective sanctions to take their place. The tribal sanctions for criminal offences were death, banishment or mutilation. The first two are suitable only for the most serious offences: the last offends against the principles of British law. Fine and imprisonment, which are the available alternatives, are often ineffective under existing African conditions, and the proper enforcement of statutory law may therefore be difficult.

British rule has also affected the customary law enforced in the tribal courts: directly, by forbidding the application of tribal custom where it conflicts with British ideas of justice or morality;<sup>2</sup> indirectly, by following a policy of

<sup>1</sup> The nature of customary sanctions is briefly explained in p. 146-7 above.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. native courts are usually forbidden to enforce customary law relating to witchcraft.

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economic and social development which has greatly changed the circumstances under which men live. Thus the introduction of money, cash-cropping, commercial and industrial development, rail and road communications, Christianity, and school education have so changed African ways of life that custom with regard to such matters as land, marriage, property and inheritance is changing too. In some cases customary law is adapted to suit the changed conditions. In others where existing customary law cannot be applied, new law is gradually being formed by decisions of the native courts, as in cases arising out of money and trading transactions.

Since law reflects the way in which people live, and the African way of life is changing, law must change too. In that sense the changes explained above are both necessary and desirable. But it cannot be denied that certain disadvantages have occurred during the process. In tribal times the general principles of the law were well known and acceptable to the people; they were administered by chiefs and elders who were respected for their wide knowledge of tribal custom; and tribal sanctions, although informal compared with modern legal sanctions, were nevertheless very effective.

The law which is administered by the native courts to-day to some extent lacks these advantages. Much of the enacted law is not necessarily acceptable or fully understood, either by the people or even by the chiefs and elders who enforce it. Modern sanctions tend to be less effective than those of former times. Even customary (civil) law provides difficulties. Chiefs and elders used to acquire their knowledge of customary law during a long period of tribal education for which modern conditions often fail to provide the necessary leisure, and the ordinary native elder is tending to become less learned in customary law than his predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'The effect of modern conditions (e.g. the absence of many men

There is the further difficulty that neither custom nor enacted law provides a guide to many of the civil cases now coming before the native courts, and similar cases may be decided on different principles in different places. Moreover, illiterate elders, versed only in existing customary law, are not well fitted to create new principles of law in civil cases of a new type, such as those which arise out of commercial intercourse.

Another problem is the need for a change in court procedure. In many areas proceedings in the tribal courts were informal and 'more after the style of a family council than a court of law'. There were no written records, no rules of admissibility of evidence, and no regular machinery for the execution of judgements. Hearings were attended by relatives and friends as well as witnesses, and all were free to speak. Time was no object.

Informal procedure of this kind is becoming less and less suited to modern conditions. Many Africans are in paid employment and for them time is a serious factor. Rules of evidence are now necessary since judges are less likely than in the past to have pre-knowledge of the facts of the cases which come before them; and oaths can no longer properly be used as evidence where the breakdown of tribal belief makes cheating easy for those who have ceased to believe in supernatural punishment. Thus 'such questions as the burden of proof, the admissibility of hearsay evidence, the value of circumstantial evidence, the admissibility of evidence as to character, etc., are by no means mere technicalities'.<sup>1</sup>

from their homes for long periods, the need for continuous work to earn a living, the influence of missions, etc.) in restricting the opportunities for tribal education of this kind needs no emphasis. It is a well-known fact, moreover, that the exact memory for detail which is characteristic of primitive and illiterate minds is usually unable to survive the process of modern education.'

Arthur Phillips, *Report on Native Tribunals*, Government Printer, Nairobi, Kenya, p. 277.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Kenya, p. 247.

Thus change has already taken place both in the law administered by the native courts and in their procedure, and further changes can be expected. The question arises whether the courts should be left unaided and unguided to adapt law and procedure as they see fit, or whether the central government should co-ordinate their development on the lines of some general policy.

The central governments have always taken a great interest in the native courts, partly because they have been found convenient agents for enforcing a good deal of enacted law, and partly, also, because the contentment of the people with colonial rule depends in large measure on the efficiency and acceptability of the native court system. Government control in the past, however, has been exercised chiefly through its administrative officers. These have had the duty of supervising the courts, revising their judgments and hearing appeals. Their main object has been to prevent abuses.

Development in recent years has led colonial governments to realize the need for attempting more than this. However able and painstaking administrative officers may be, not necessarily all of them are well qualified to advise the courts on the difficult problem of adjusting customary law to changed conditions. Moreover, it is undesirable that native law should develop according to different principles in different parts of a single colony; but without guidance from the centre this is likely to occur. At present, neither administrative officers nor members of native courts are likely to know what decisions have been reached elsewhere on issues relevant to the cases with which they deal.

One possible answer to this problem is the appointment of a Judicial Adviser<sup>1</sup> and of Provincial Judicial Officers,

<sup>1</sup> Judicial Advisers have already been appointed in Buganda, in Kenya, and on the Gold Coast. Similar appointments are contemplated elsewhere, e.g. in Northern Rhodesia, and an advisory committee on native law has been set up in the Colonial Office in London.

trained in British law and familiar with local conditions and native law, to undertake as specialists work which at present is often combined with the many other duties of administrative officers. It is believed that such officers would be most valuable in supervising the work of the native courts, and in providing the necessary co-ordinated guidance for the proper evolution and adaptation of native law and procedure. They would provide a suitable connecting link between the native court system and the government courts, for, as we have seen, there now exist side by side two systems of law in each territory, administered by two kinds of courts. Yet, Hailey states:

The general aim of legislation in British colonies may be said to be directed towards producing a common body of law which is expressed as applicable both to Europeans and Africans.<sup>1</sup>

And again:

... there is not yet any clear view on the fundamental question whether a uniform law is to be achieved by a more liberal adaptation of English law to the needs of African conditions, or alternatively by a deliberate and regularized modification of the law and procedure which the native courts apply.<sup>2</sup>

The appointment of specialized judicial officers, knowledgeable both in British and native law, would appear to be the first necessary step towards the solution, not only of this problem, but of others also. Law needs to be certain, but it cannot be certain unless it is well known. Yet, in fact, the court members of to-day tend to be less knowledgeable than their predecessors even of their own customary law.<sup>3</sup>

There is thus a great need that customary law should be recorded so that both original custom and the principles on which it is being adapted can be known and certain. The Kenya Report on Native Tribunals<sup>4</sup> suggests that

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> Para. 841.

'continuous, systematic, specialized study is necessary, and it should be carried out on a co-ordinated basis' as one of the tasks of Provincial Judicial Officers.

It may also be desirable that the central government—through its administrative and judicial officers—should influence the composition of the courts. If power of appointment is left solely with the chief, or with the chief and council, one of two disadvantages is likely to occur. On the one hand, if the chief is educated and 'progressive', he may appoint too large a proportion of younger men of his own kind, and the courts may then lose the confidence of illiterate and backward people who still form the larger part of the population. On the other hand, if illiterate and conservative elders dominate the tribunals, they may fail to understand many of the issues which come before the courts for decision. This particularly applies, of course, to cases which arise out of commercial transactions and the use of money. These dangers can be avoided if the central government has the power to ensure that courts are properly representative both of the older and of the more modern elements in African society.

This, however, is not enough. The increasing complexity of the law and the problems which arise in adapting it to modern needs make it urgently necessary that at least some members of the more important native courts, and more especially of the appeal courts, should have legal training. It has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that this need can best be met by training Africans of good general education in certain aspects of both British and customary law; and that prior to their appointment as judges they should gain further experience as clerks to the senior courts, as inspectors and instructors of the relatively untrained court clerks now employed, or as research assistants in customary law to the Provincial Judicial Officers.

It has also been suggested that a good deal might be

<sup>1</sup> Kenya Report on Native Tribunals, paras. 563-71.

done to improve the present situation if a proportion of the existing native court judges could be given short courses of instruction in those aspects of law and procedure in which improvement is most necessary. The provision of suitable legal education is an urgent need, and until it can be met little real progress in solving present-day problems of the native courts can be expected.

While many of the technical problems of law and procedure may be solved by these means, there yet remains the basic problem of securing for the law more general and willing acceptance by the people. Commercial and industrial development, and the spread of Christianity, Islam, and modern education have weakened the tribal sanctions by which the obedience of the mass of people was formerly secured. Modern penal sanctions are often an unsatisfactory substitute. It is difficult and sometimes impossible to impose money penalties on people whose income is still largely measured in other forms of wealth. Imprisonment may inconvenience them, but it is not usually felt as a disgrace, and it has the compensating advantage for many people of securing for them higher standards of food, clothing, and accommodation than they could find outside the prison. But although modern sanctions are thus often ineffective it is hard to see what could take their place. The only remedy may well be the slow development of a type of society in which these sanctions will be more effective.

But, after all, most men in most societies do not observe the law merely through fear of legal sanctions. They obey it because they are loyal members of their society, and because they recognize the law under which they live as the expression of what is right, just, and necessary for the well-being of them all. It is this element of general acceptance which is so often lacking among the illiterate and semi-literate majority in tropical Africa at the present time. This is partly due to sheer ignorance of what the law is, especi-

ally among illiterates or those who are literate only in the vernacular.<sup>1</sup> But even where a law is known people often do not understand the reasons for it. It may be regarded as merely oppressive and restrictive, and in such cases people may break it if they feel that they can safely do so.<sup>2</sup> In so far as this is true it may be remedied by the spread of education. But there is also a political cause. The central governments are still looked on by most people as alien governments, and while that attitude persists the laws they make are in some sense alien laws. Thus fuller respect for the law may in some measure have to wait on the development of a feeling of nationality. When this is achieved, and when the law-making assembly becomes representative of it, so government-made laws will become more generally acceptable. The law will then be maintained, not only by the penal sanctions enforced by government, but also by greater support from the ordinary citizen.

<sup>1</sup> Thus every year many people are convicted of statutory offences in respect of acts which they did not know were breaches of the law. Of course, this is also true of European countries, but in Africa this particular problem is much more acute.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. laws designed to safeguard soil fertility and public health.

## THE APPROACH TO SELF-GOVERNMENT

A very brief outline of the organization and powers of central government institutions was given in Chapter X. No one maintains that these institutions are ideal and that they should not be changed. They mark the stage so far reached in a long process of experiment which aims at the final achievement of full self-government. Difference of opinion can therefore only arise in deciding how and when future changes should take place.

Throughout this survey we have assumed that we are aiming at something more than mere independence. We are interested not only in the fact of independence but also in its quality. Self-government should mean representative and preferably democratic self-government, and not government by any small minority enjoying special economic and political privileges. Self-government should also mean efficient government. If these two conditions are not met there is a danger of perpetuating for many of the people their present unsatisfactory way of life, and on these terms self-government might well be bought at too high a price. Our task is to consider proposals for future change in this light and to see how far they are likely to assist in achieving our ideal.

Problems concerned with efficiency arise in any case, whether self-government is the aim or not. One such problem is that of size. Most of the present colonial boundaries were fixed in the nineteenth century, mainly for political reasons and under very different conditions from those which obtain to-day. The result has been that some colonies are far too small for their governments ever to be



able to provide efficiently or economically the large variety of services needed in the modern African state. This is true both of East and West Africa. In East Africa, for instance, even before the outbreak of war, it had been found necessary to administer customs, currency, and postal services on a common basis for Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda; and Makerere College is an inter-territorial institution for higher education which serves the needs of all East African territories, including Zanzibar. In West and in East Africa there are Courts of Appeal which serve all the territories in each group.

During the recent war the need for close co-operation in a common policy was even more strongly felt. To some extent this was a temporary need to meet a sudden emergency, but there are many other matters of permanent importance for which a centrally administered common policy is highly desirable. Migrants travel from one territory to another in search of work. Deforestation in one colony may lead to soil erosion, shrinking water supplies and river-flooding in another. The spread of epidemic disease and insect pests is not halted by political boundaries. If modern conditions make the effective administration of larger political units easier, they also make it more necessary.

Large political units are desirable, not only for this reason, but also in the interests of economy. Government revenues are limited by the smallness of colonial populations as well as by their poverty. Every colony, however small, needs research and other specialized services in agriculture, animal husbandry, medicine, and education. It is wasteful to supply them to the highest standard for each small political unit, and great economies are possible, *per head of population*, where they can be made to serve very wide areas. Similar economies are possible in administration by reducing the number of governors, secretariat officials, and highly paid departmental heads.

In West Africa the separation of the dependencies from each other by large blocks of foreign-controlled territory makes development of this kind more difficult than in East Africa. There the territories under British rule have common boundaries, and the improvement of air transport may soon remove the remaining obstacles to speedy travel. But although geography does not hinder, other factors do. Common interests exist, but so does suspicion, especially racial suspicion, and some Africans in Uganda and Tanganyika fear that closer union with Kenya, unless adequate safeguards were provided, might mean a worsening of their chances of economic and political development.

Between 1924 and 1931 several unsuccessful attempts were made to work out acceptable proposals for co-ordinating East African policy and administration. All that was achieved was the establishment of a Conference of East African Governors which had no executive or legislative powers. They discussed matters in private, and any agreement reached could only be put into effect by getting identical laws passed by the legislative councils of each territory. Meanwhile, the need for an effective common organization has continued to increase. Common services have already been established for Defence, Posts and Telegraphs, Customs and Excise, Income Tax, Meteorology, Civil Aviation, Air Transport, Statistics, Currency, Central Research and Higher Education. It is foreseen that it may well be desirable that control 'over industrial development and the production and marketing of agricultural produce should be exercised on an East African rather than a territorial basis'.<sup>1</sup> It is equally desirable that the development of communications should be centrally controlled.

The Colonial Office Paper No. 191 on Inter-Territorial

<sup>1</sup> Col. No. 191. *Inter-Territorial Organization in East Africa*, H.M.S.O., 1946.

Organization in East Africa, while recognizing that political federation or fusion is not immediately practicable, presents proposals for establishing an effective organization for providing necessary common services. It proposes an East African High Commission consisting of the Governors of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda, and a central legislature on which European, Indian and African interests would be equally represented. It makes provision for executive administration to be in the hands of five officials. It would leave finance to be settled by negotiation and agreement between the territorial governments. These proposals have been criticized, especially in Kenya, and at the time of writing the issue is still in doubt. What is certain, however, is that a problem exists which must be solved if East African development is not to be greatly hampered.

The same need for a common organization is felt by Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, but again there are political and racial difficulties. However, the important first step has been taken of forming a Central African Council consisting of the Governors and other representatives of the territories. Even if this falls short of the ideal of an efficient central legislature and executive, it may well prepare the way for some future advance towards it. A West African Council has also recently been set up. It consists of the Governors only and has no executive or legislative functions.

Apart from the problems of securing inter-territorial co-ordination, there is the further problem of improving the *internal* co-ordination of government services. The civil service consists of the administration proper and of a number of technical and professional departments, each with its own departmental head who is responsible to the Governor. These departments, says Hailey,

... tend to trench on each other's field of work, with the result that there is not only overlapping but even, at times, a con-

frict of policy. Much can be done towards the co-ordination of policies by mutual discussion between heads of departments and local authorities, but the direction of policy cannot rightly be settled by inter-departmental compromises. In theory, the Governor is the controlling agency, but he is to a great extent dependent on a Chief or Colonial Secretary who may find the burden excessive.<sup>1</sup>

There is now a tendency to tackle this problem by organizing departments of government in groups under members of executive councils, each member being directly responsible to the Governor for his group of departments. Thus in Kenya, which adopted this solution in 1945, agriculture, animal husbandry, veterinary services, forestry, soil and water conservation, and natural resources generally, as well as marketing and settlement, will be co-ordinated under one member of the Governor's Council, who will have a general authority and responsibility in these matters direct to the Governor.<sup>2</sup>

Co-ordination is also important in the provinces. There the provincial commissioner or resident is responsible for the general well-being of his province, and officers of technical departments engaged in provincial work are thus in one sense subject to his direction and control. They are also, naturally, responsible to the heads of their own departments. This dual responsibility may give rise to awkward situations if, for example, the policy of a department calls for action which the provincial administrative officer thinks ill-timed in view of the attitude of the native authorities for which he is responsible. Sir Donald Cameron has suggested that the difficulty must be resolved by definitely subordinating the activities of departmental officers to administrative control. The administrative officer 'must be regarded as the judge of the effect of any activity on the conditions of the province, political or

<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya Government White Paper, June 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> Hailey, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya Government White Paper, June 1945.

otherwise, from the native point of view'.<sup>1</sup> Lord Hai believes that the desired result can often be obtained encouraging close association and co-operation between administrative and technical officers. With this end view he urges the siting of all provincial department headquarters in the same place, and the formation of provincial committees on which all departments should be represented. These committees would sit under the chairmanship of the provincial commissioner, and would be used to formulate general provincial policy which would ordinated the activities of all departments. Considerable progress on these lines has been made during the past years.

If administrative officers are to be able satisfactorily co-ordinate many differing activities, it is most necessary that they should be relieved of some of the office work with which they are still heavily burdened. This demands the recruitment of more well-educated and responsible men than are available at present; and, indeed, it is likely that there can be any considerable increase in general efficiency of government administration until provision of good secondary education in Africa has been widely extended. The annual output from the schools of men who have reached even school certificate standard can still best be numbered in tens rather than in hundreds, even in the bigger and more 'advanced' colonies.<sup>2</sup>

The employment in the government service of more better-qualified Africans, and especially of men who are qualified to rise to senior posts, is also important for progress towards effective self-government. This point has already been explained, and we have noted the British government's intention of assisting suitable persons in

<sup>1</sup> *The Principles of Native Administration and their Application*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IV for details on this point.

colonies to obtain the necessary academic and professional qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

The Africanization of the senior civil service, though it will take time, is a relatively simple problem. It will be much more difficult to ensure that, when self-government comes, and power is handed over, it will rest with the people generally and not with any particular minority of race or class. That self-government should mean *representative* or *democratic* self-government should be unquestionable. The British people believe that there are no differences of race, birth, sex, wealth, education or power sufficient to justify the permanent subordination of one race to another; or, within any group, of most men to a privileged minority. It is on the basis of this belief that they are prepared to grant the right to colonial people to rule themselves. But if this belief is accepted by Africans, as it must be by those who claim self-government as a right, they must claim it not just for the tribe or class to which they belong, but for *all* persons within the colony, however poor, or ignorant, or under-privileged they may now be. The ideal of human equality does not deny that differences and inequalities exist, but it does refuse to label any men or groups of men as innately inferior to others—and therefore less right-worthy—on *a priori* grounds. The ideal stands for equality of opportunity and equality of rights, including political rights, as the best means of securing a healthy development of society and of each individual person in it.

If we accept this—and after all it must be accepted by all those who would claim self-government as a right—it follows that there should be no question of the supreme power of government being handed over to any privileged minority, and it makes no difference whether the minority in question is white or black or brown. No race or class can establish as a right for itself what it would deny to others.

So much for the ideal, but to put it into practice under

<sup>1</sup> p. 131.

African conditions is extremely difficult. History does not help us. There are, indeed, several examples in the British Commonwealth of one-time colonies which have reached full responsible self-government and Dominion status but which, at an earlier stage of development, had constitutions not unlike those of the tropical African dependencies of to-day. Thus the Australian colonies had governors appointed by the Crown, and legislative councils with minorities of nominated or elected unofficial members. Self-government was reached: (i) by increasing the number of unofficial members until they formed the majority and finally the whole of the Assembly; (ii) by the substitution of election for nomination; and (iii) by increasing the powers of the Assemblies and reducing those of the Governors until full autonomy was attained. Such development was possible and beneficial because the colonies which reached self-government in this way were already 'permanent, self-conscious, and possessed of distinct interests'.<sup>1</sup>

Self-government was not granted solely because Britain accepted the ideal of political equality between distinct groups of men. It was also justified by the facts. These colonies not only asked for more independence, but their inhabitants generally were reasonably well fitted to exercise it. This meant in practice that they were seeking some form of democratic self-government.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties which hinder progress towards the ideal in tropical Africa are indeed great. Effective democracy

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Delisle Burns, *Political Ideals*, Fourth Edition, O.U.P. 1929, p. 222. Delisle Burns considers that a grant of self-government to any group can be justified if it has these three characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> Two exceptions to this generalization must be noted—both African. In South Africa and in Southern Rhodesia the grant of self-government left the majority of the (African) people without effective representation. These two instances indeed emphasize the fact that under *present* African conditions any grant of self-government along traditional lines must mean minority rule with all its attendant dangers to the interests of the unrepresented masses.



implies an electorate which has reached some minimum standard of political consciousness and national feeling. At present only a small minority has attained it. It implies too that there exists a sufficient number of people who are highly qualified by education and experience of public affairs, and able, if elected, wisely to exercise legislative and executive powers in the interests of their fellow-countrymen. So far, very few Africans have had opportunities of so qualifying themselves.

It is this dual problem of backwardness among the future electorate and of inexperience among many of its potential representatives that the British and colonial governments are now most earnestly trying to solve. Failure would mean either delaying a grant of self-government to the distant time when all Africans can be educated, and national feeling has become an effective political force, or granting it to a small minority which might use it for selfish ends. It is therefore important that a satisfactory solution should be reached.

The problem is being tackled in several ways. First, it must be noted that the mass education schemes now under discussion are important for political as well as for social and economic reasons. They represent a serious attempt to educate the great majority of people who have never been to school, and to widen the education of those who have. If it is successful mass education can very greatly help the attainment of one of the essentials for democratic self-government—the education of the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, as we saw in Chapter XI, local governments are becoming more responsible and more democratic. There are many recent instances of this trend both in West and East Africa, and more particularly in eastern Nigeria and eastern and northern Uganda. In both regions the system of 'warrant' chiefs or headmen has been replaced

<sup>1</sup> I am here using the word 'education' in its widest sense, and not with the restricted meaning of literacy or school education only.

by a graded series of representative councils. For instance, in the Eastern Province of Uganda there are now four grades of council:

The *Muluka* or Village Council,  
The *Gombolola* or Sub-Chief's Council,  
The County Council, and  
The District or Tribal Council

The *Muluka* Councils consist of a minority of chiefs and of a large majority of representatives elected by the people of the *Muluka*, together with a few leading people elected by the Council itself. These *Muluka* Councils each elect representatives to sit on the *Gombolola* Councils, which, in turn, elect their representatives to sit on the County Councils. These in their turn elect representatives to sit on the District or Tribal Council.

Thus each Council acts as an electing body, or *electoral college*, for the council of the next higher grade, and the people, by being directly represented on the *Muluka* Councils, are also indirectly represented by the unofficial majorities on the higher councils. Each grade of council, of course, has several other functions besides that of election.

This system of indirect election is particularly suited to existing African conditions. It means that at each stage where election takes place the electors choose from among people they know. It should mean too that the elected members of the District Council come to it trained by experience of dealing with public affairs in the lower grades of council, and therefore able to understand more clearly than the ordinary *muluka* elector the need to subordinate narrow local interests to the wider interests of the whole district.

Indirect elections to local government may therefore be of great potential importance as a means of selecting, training, and broadening the minds of people's representatives. At the moment, and for some time to come, their work may be restricted to local government. Ultimately,

however, the effect must be to ease the transition to popular representation on the legislative council of the colonial government.

Training for responsible work in public affairs is also being assisted by the appointment of suitably qualified African unofficials to government advisory committees concerned with education, labour, agriculture, and similar matters. Still more important, because more people attend them, are the provincial and regional councils which have been established during the past few years. These may consist mainly of chiefs, as in Nigeria and on the Gold Coast, or they may also include representatives of urban advisory councils and welfare associations as in Northern Rhodesia. Such councils are useful for the discussion of interests shared in common by a number of local governments, and they deal with national rather than purely local affairs. They help both to encourage national feeling and to provide a means for its expression. They are therefore even more important than local government councils in training potential representatives on colonial legislative councils.

At present regional councils have no legislative authority, although they may obtain it at a later stage, and in any case they may be given other functions. Lord Hailey suggests that:

Nowhere . . . are they likely to have a permanent value, as part of a framework of political institutions, if their functions are purely consultative. It may be suggested, therefore, that in the first instance they should have authority to review local authority by-laws, to provide for the training of personnel for local authority services, and to maintain services which, while of local application, cannot be undertaken by individual authorities.

The regional councils recently set up in Nigeria under the proposals for constitutional reorganization published in 1945<sup>1</sup> have many of these functions:

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 6599.

. . . all Bills, except urgent Bills, would be discussed in the Councils before being submitted to the Legislative Council, and amendments could be suggested. The Councils would also be given some financial responsibility. Regional budgets would be drawn up, on which would be borne the cost of all Government services in the region, including salaries, except central services. . . . The regional estimates would be debated in the Councils and amended if desired, after which they would be submitted for the Governor's approval.<sup>1</sup>

A further important function of the councils is to act as electoral colleges, for the councils elect twenty of the twenty-four elected African members of the Nigerian Legislative Council.<sup>2</sup> This principle of indirect election through electoral colleges has also been adopted for the new Gold Coast constitution, for the nine Provincial members are elected by the Joint Provincial Council. It may well be applied in other colonies, and since it may help to speed up African political development it needs some explanation.

Most illiterate African cultivators or labourers may still be too locally minded for any direct method of electing national representatives to be immediately practicable. Yet they are already quite capable of selecting suitable men to represent their interests in local affairs. Men so selected would get politically educated above the general level of their fellow-countrymen by attendance at local councils, and thus become better fitted than the primary electors to elect representatives to the next higher stage. This kind of indirect election, where each grade of council becomes an electoral college for the next, means in practice wiser election: and if the lowest grade of council is truly representative, the higher grades will also be representative—not of any particular class or minority interests, but of the people generally.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Colonial Review*, June 1945, p. 44, and based on an article in the *Economist*, 10 March 1945.

<sup>2</sup> The remaining four would be directly elected by ballot as at present by the townspeople of Lagos and Calabar.

This is the important point. The alternatives are all unsatisfactory. Nomination by the Governor of representatives of African opinion does not satisfy those who are politically minded. The restriction of the right to vote to educated, wealthy, or politically conscious people may well threaten the interests of those to whom the vote is not given, and might be held to justify delay in granting legislative councils unofficial majorities and increased powers. Africans are critical of the government of Southern Rhodesia where, since 1923, over one and a quarter million Africans have been ruled by a government controlled by the European minority. They suspect that African interests may be sacrificed to the minority interests of the white men who control the government. But is there any reason to believe that in other colonies it would be any more satisfactory to give sole political power to an educated or wealthy African minority.

At present both the system of taxation and the level of salaries in the government service tend to favour the richer, better-educated, and vocal minorities. Yet the main effort of such minorities seems to be chiefly directed to raising salary rates yet higher—necessarily at the expense of the poorer part of the population. And the well-educated and richer class—who alone among Africans have so far had representation on legislative councils—have steadily opposed any proposals to tax them more heavily than the poor. African minorities, no less than white, may lay themselves open to the charge of seeking to use political power for selfish ends.

The system of indirect election through a series of local and regional councils may well go a long way to provide a solution to the problem of establishing a satisfactory representative system. The better-educated and wealthier class would still predominate on legislative councils, as they do on the legislative assemblies of every country. But they would have been put there by the people.

They would indirectly depend on popular support for their re-election, and this should be an effective safeguard against the worst dangers of minority rule.

Meanwhile, few even of the local governments have yet got good representative institutions, and until these have been developed there can be little real progress with popular representation on regional or central government councils. Electoral colleges like the provincial councils on the Gold Coast and the proposed regional councils for Nigeria are composed mainly of chiefs. Do these necessarily properly represent their people? Doubts have already been expressed in a responsible Northern Nigerian vernacular newspaper:

In the new Constitution the Chiefs will have the opportunity of learning to express their wishes in the Legislative Council, as representatives of their own people. But what about the people? What about the farmers, the salaried officials, the traders and all the rest? What provision is there in the new Constitution for them to start learning how to express themselves openly, and not behind closed doors and in private? . . . We know that the North is not yet ripe for the introduction of election by ballot of representatives of the people. We feel that some scheme should, however, be evolved which will enable the common men to have their voices heard.<sup>1</sup>

These questions might equally well have been asked in almost any part of tropical Africa. They cannot be indefinitely ignored.

<sup>1</sup> From *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, abridged extracts given in *West Africa*, 22 December 1945, and in the *Colonial Review*, March 1946, p. 136.

## CHAPTER XIV

### REVIEW

THE problems which have been discussed in the two books of this survey are all, in one way or another, the result of recent contact with the outside world. This contact is affecting the whole structure of African society, and every phase of life and thought of its individual members.

It is causing changes which are both rapid and uneven, and is subjecting African society to heavy strain. Julian Huxley in a recent book<sup>1</sup> stresses the new and formidable problem caused by modern scientific and technical development, which has everywhere speeded up the rate of major social change. It means in effect, he says, that each individual may have to recast his ideas and attitudes once or even twice during his working life. If this makes life difficult, even for educated men in Europe, it makes it still more difficult for Africans, most of whom are uneducated. Indeed, they are subjected to double stress. They have to catch up, as it were, from a tribal to a modern organization of society, while modern society itself is changing at a rapid rate. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that change is uneven as well as rapid, and it is this quality of unevenness that causes tropical Africa's most difficult problems. Many examples of uneven development have been given in earlier chapters. For instance, land is now used for profit as well as for subsistence, so that more land is cultivated than ever before. This change should have been accompanied by changes in land tenure and in agricultural methods. They have failed to come

<sup>1</sup> *On Living in a Revolution*, Chatto and Windus 1944.

quickly enough, the balance of agriculture has been upset, and soil erosion has become a serious problem. It has been the same with cattle. A new factor, veterinary science, was introduced and took effect too quickly to be accompanied by any corresponding change in African ideas of cattle-management. Heavy overstocking and the destruction of the soil have been the result. Again, labour was required on plantations and mines, and the people quickly responded to opportunities for wage-earning. But there has been no satisfactory adjustment of social organization. Men leave their wives in their village homes while they go in search of temporary work, and by their absence they disorganize native agriculture and rural society. Yet, because their absence is only temporary, there has been little growth of stable urban societies where wage-earners can lead a family life under decent conditions, and acquire industrial skills of permanent value. Custom and social and political organization are still, in large measure, based on the small-scale tribal societies of fifty years ago; but the economic conditions under which men now live are those of modern large-scale societies. Until this situation can be altered by changing African society to fit modern needs there can be no escape from strain and stress, hardship and discomfort. Social evils will multiply.

The main burden of this remoulding of African society must fall on educated men of African race. They stand between two worlds—the tribal and the modern—and have some knowledge of both. It is they who can best teach the others, the uneducated, who are still attempting to live by tribal custom in a changing modern world.

So far, unfortunately, the education of the educated has done little to assist them with this task. It has too often been narrowly restricted to providing professional or technical training—to providing useful cogs in the machinery of government and of industrial and commercial enterprise. But if we hold the ideal of a free Africa of responsible self-



governing States, must we not also give at least equal emphasis in school and colleges and in adult life to the provision of opportunities for political education? As men obtain political power they must be able to form sound political judgements if power is to be used wisely. But sound political judgements must be based on knowledge. Good intentions are not enough.

It may be that men and women of good will are most admirable, but they are dangerous if they are ignorant. And in political action knowledge is even more required nowadays than good intentions . . . no man can make up by good wishes for his ignorance of facts. Political education is what is most needed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Delisle Burns, pp. 337-8.

## SHORT LIST OF USEFUL BOOKS

### I. GENERAL.

HAILEY: *An African Survey*. O.U.P., 1938.

(Invaluable as a source of information and the only good general survey available.)

WILSON: *The Analysis of Social Change*. C.U.P., 1945.

(This book is very useful, but it assumes the reader already knows a good deal of African sociology.)

MAIR: *Welfare in the Colonies*. R.I.I.A., 1944.

MACMILLAN: *Africa Emergent*. Faber and Faber, 1938.

*Fabian Colonial Essays*. Allen and Unwin, 1945.

*The Colonial Review*. (Quarterly. 5s. per annum, post free.)

*The Crown Colonist*. (Monthly. 12s. per annum, post free.)

(The two periodicals are the best cheap sources of up-to-date information about colonial affairs.)

The following cheaper and shorter books are written from different standpoints, representative of modern British opinions on colonial development.

HAILEY: *The Future of the Colonial Peoples*. O.U.P., 1943.  
3s. 6d.

HANCOCK: *Argument of Empire*. Penguin Special.

WALKER: *Colonies*, C.U.P., 1944. 3s. 6d.

HINDEN: *Plan for Africa*. Allen and Unwin, 1942. 7s. 6d.

WRONG: *Five Points for Africa*. Edinburgh House Press, 1942.  
2s. 6d.

BROOMFIELD: *Colour Conflict*. Edinburgh House Press, 1943.  
2s. 6d.

BARNES: *Soviet Light on the Colonies*. Penguin Special.

MACMILLAN: *Democratize the Empire*. Kegan Paul, 1941. 1s.

II. *HEALTH AND MEDICINE.* (Chapters II to III.)

WRENCH: *The Wheel of Health.* Daniel.

HALL: *The Improvement of Native Agriculture in Relation to Population and Public Health.* O.U.P., 1936.

WORTHINGTON: *Science in Africa.* O.U.P., 1938.

CMD. 6050, on *Nutrition in the Colonial Empire*, Part I.

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Annual Reports of the Colonial Medical Departments.

III. *EDUCATION.* (Chapters IV to VII.)

Annual Reports of the Colonial Education Departments.

CMD. 6647, on *Higher Education in the Colonies.*

CMD. 6655, on *Higher Education in West Africa.*

COLONIAL 186, on *Mass Education in Colonial Society.*

*Oversea Education.* (Quarterly. 4s. per annum, post free.)

LIVINGSTONE: *The Future in Education.* Cambridge.

IV. *GOVERNMENT.* (Chapters VIII to XIII.)

WIGHT: *The Development of the Legislative Council.* Faber and Faber, 1946.

PERHAM: *Native Administration in Nigeria.* O.U.P., 1937.

PERHAM and HUXLEY: *Race and Politics in Kenya.* Faber and Faber, 1944.

CAMERON: *My Tanganyika Service.* Allen and Unwin.

PHILLIPS: *Report on Native Tribunals.* Kenya, 1945.

CMD. 6713: *Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution of Nigeria.*

COLONIAL 191, on *Inter-Territorial Organization in East Africa.*

COLONIAL 197, on *Organization of the Colonial Service.*

COLONIAL 198, on *Post-War Training for the Colonial Service.*

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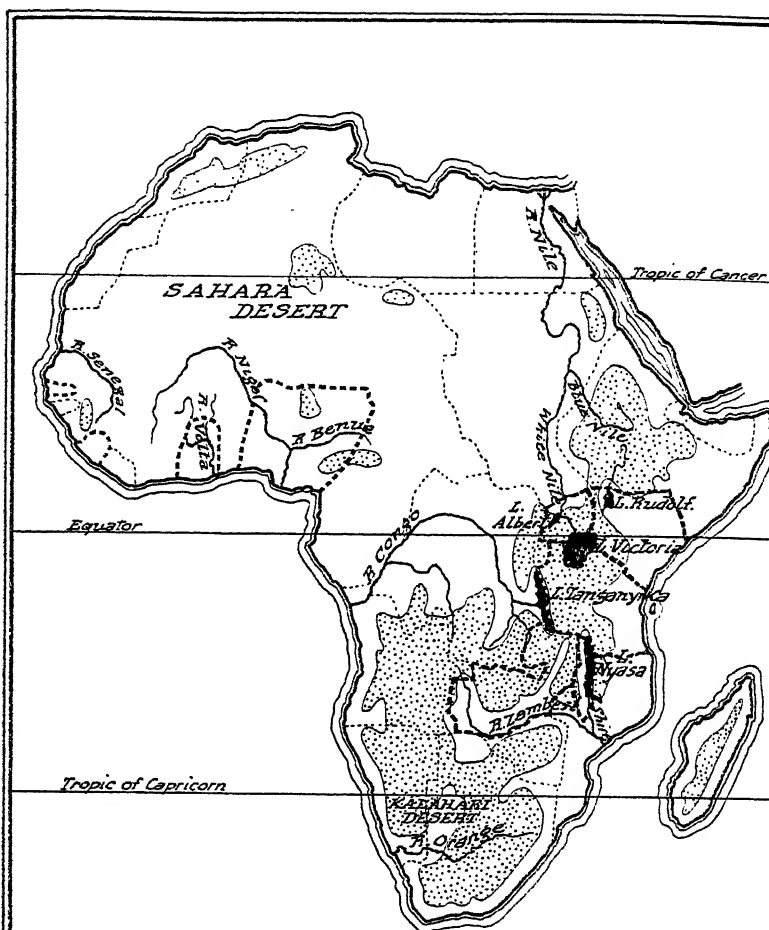
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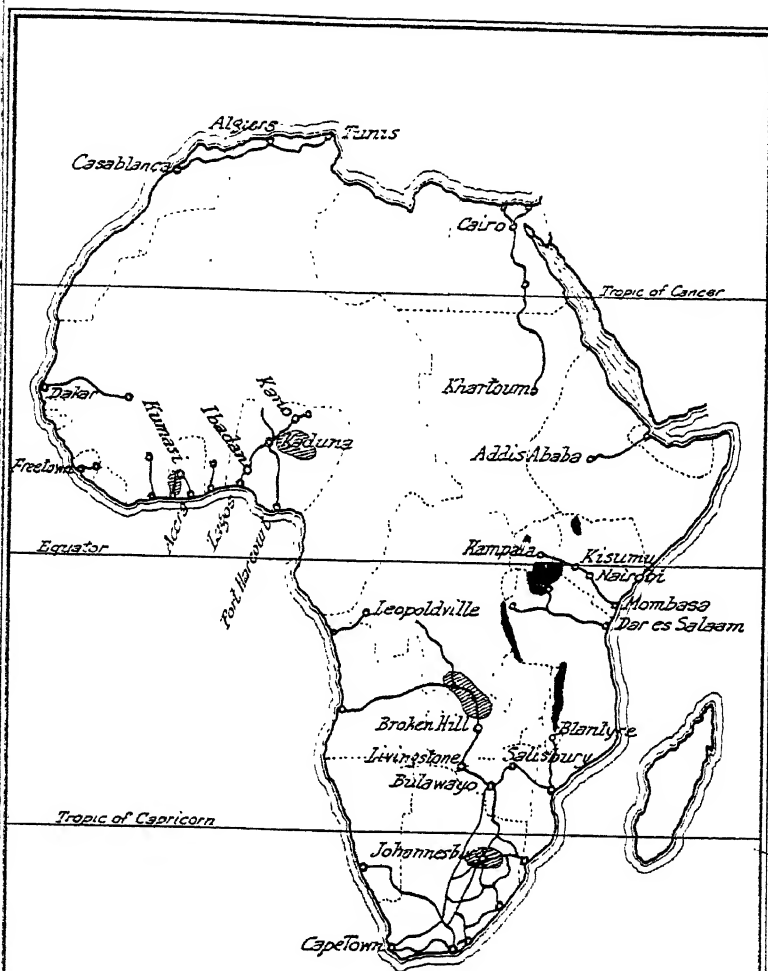


## AFRICA

### *Physical Features*

*Land above 3,000 feet shown thus :-*





## AFRICA

### Railway Development

*This map should be compared with the waterways opposite.*

*Railways shown thus - - -*

*Important mining areas shown thus - (hatched pattern)*

